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ABSTRACT

The materials in this report deal with the process of children's writing and rewriting. The first section of the report describes the original methodology of a study of children's rewriting and explains how and why that methodology was changed as the study progressed. The second section provides a review of related literature, while the third, fourth, and fifth sections reproduce articles on the subject written by two different teacher/researchers: "Reading and Writing Process: A Reciprocal Agreement," by M. A. Boutwell; "Research Update: Questions for Teachers Who Wonder if Their Writers Change," by D. H. Graves and M. E. Giacobbe; and "A Writer Reads, A Reader Writes," by M. E. Giacobbe. Comprising the bulk of the report, the sixth section provides a detailed account of a case study of one child as she wrote and revised in the classroom, and the seventh section discusses the rationale for choosing the methodology used in the case study. (FL)

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# FINAL REPORT

for NCTE Research Foundation

Project No. 80:11

September 1980 -- October 1982

## A Study of Children's Rewriting

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# Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Research Foundation of the National Council of Teachers of English for their support. Because of it, I have been able to work collaboratively with several teacher-researchers and to duplicate written and video-taped data from the original N.I.E. funded study, "How Children Change as Writers" (Graves, Calkins, Sowers, 1978-1981). Without research funds from the Research Foundation, I would not have been able to carry the data-bank with me when I moved from the research office at the University of New Hampshire to a Ph.D. program at New York University and from there to a faculty position at Teachers College, Columbia University. Having the data has not only enabled me to write the dissertation which forms the body of this final report, it has also meant my doctoral students can join me in studying the data. During the past two years, sections of the data have also been shared with practicing teachers from throughout the country (see vita). Finally, it has been invaluable to me to return again and again to the data, for viewing it with more distance has given me new lenses. It is not only the children but also their researcher who needs to return to early drafts, rereading them, reflecting on what has been done, refining and reshaping and reconsidering one's first thoughts.

My thanks also go to the National Institute of Education, the funding agency for our study, "How Children Change as Writers."

This final report was made possible by two funding agencies, but it was given direction by the researchers, teachers and children who've taught me so much. I am especially grateful to Donald H. Graves, who conceived of the initial N.I.E.-funded project and helped throughout my involvement in the project. My thanks also go to the children and teachers at Atkinson Elementary School: to Susie, Birger, Diane, Amy, Greg and to Mrs. Howard,

Mrs. Currier, Mrs. Giacobbe and Ms. Boutwell.

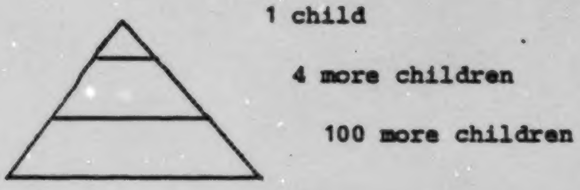
Gathering data is one thing: writing about it is another. Without Donald M. Murray, this final report would never have been written. He gave me the confidence and the skill to write Lessons from a Child in my own voice, telling the story as simply and as clearly as I can. In teaching me to write, Don Murray taught me also to teach writing; I'm grateful for both lessons.

Then, too, I want to thank Professors Gordon Pradl, Bernice Cullinan and Harold Vine from New York University for their guidance and support with my dissertation.

## Section I

### "A Study of Children's Rewriting": The Original Design and Revisions on It

My original purpose when I designed this study was to describe and analyze how children learn to rewrite. Changes in children's rewriting were to be mapped through a focus on one child, a more peripheral study of four children, and informal interventions involving approximately one hundred children.



I knew from the start the intensive case-study would be of Susie Sible, one of the 16 subjects in our N.I.E. funded study. Susie's alias name is Andrea, but with the permission and encouragement of Susie and her parents I have returned to her real name.

A second focus was to be on four other children who, like Susie, were observed on a day-to-day basis for two years. I hoped these children would provide a context for understanding Susie.

Lastly, data were to be collected from 5 classrooms of children, grades 1 through 5. The teachers in those classrooms were to form a research team and they would work with me to test some of the hypotheses drawn from the case study. Our plan was that three times during the year, in October, January, and late April, a substitute teacher would free each of the 5 teachers from Atkinson Elementary School for one hour, 5 times a week, so the teachers could become researchers in their classrooms. These three weeks of data collection would each be proceeded by an all day in-service meeting for all 5 teachers, during which we would develop, standardize and share research procedures and findings.

The study, then, had two main sections. One was the case-study of Susie, set against the context of a study of four other children. The other was a research project involving 5 teachers (1-5) and 100 children. Each of these will be discussed separately.

## A Case Study of Susie

The methods and findings of this case-study are presented at great length in my dissertation (see section ). Not included in the dissertation, however, is a discussion of two changes in the original design.

In my proposal to the Research Foundation of NCTE, I described my purpose as mapping changes in Susie's rewriting. Yet once I embarked in a serious review of the literature, I saw many limitations to any attempt to divide writing into discrete linear stages. Rewriting begins, in a sense, when a writer weighs the advantages of one lead sentence against other optional leads. There is no clear differentiation between rehearsal and revision; instead they each overlap and perhaps consume the other. My purpose, therefore, changed. In the dissertation, I attempt to document and analyze how Susie's writing processes developed over two years. I

- show interrelationships and sequences in Susie's writing development

- characterize the approach to writing instruction and the classroom context in which Susie's writing development took place
- suggest ways in which cognitive development and instructional influences combined to shape Susie's writing development
- raise questions and suggest hypotheses for further research.

There has been a second change in the original design of the case-study. When I wrote the grant proposal, I envisioned my final report would involve five separate case-studies--one of Susie, and then less detailed studies of four children, grades 1-4. Implicit in the original design was the notion that by describing one youngster from each grade-level, I would build some generalizations about how children change as writers during their grade school years. Although I had read--and even written--that the goal of case-studies is to raise hypotheses rather than to produce generalizable findings, I do not think I saw the importance of simply trying to understand a single child, without needing to suggest she is representative.

It was not until I immersed myself in the data on Susie's writing that I began to see the complexities of this one individual, and to appreciate the roles others played in her writing development. My study of Susie became a study also of her friends, her teacher, and her researcher.

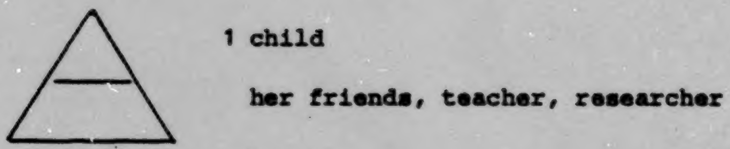
Rather than lying five separate case-studies alongside each other, I've woven them into a single narrative. Rather than viewing my subjects as 'representative,' I've realized that each of the individuals is unique.

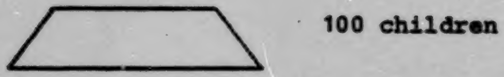
## Five Teacher-Researchers and One Hundred Children

Whereas the first section of the original study proceeded almost as planned, the effort to involve 5 teachers in a joint research project has meant many surprises and some disappointments, plus a whole series of revisions on the original study design.

It seems inconceivable I ever believed the original plan would work. For years, Graves, Sowers and I have emphasized the need to bring a slower pace into our schools so students and teachers would have time to invest themselves in their work. Yet I envisioned that between receipt of the NCTE grant in June, 1980 and late September of that year, I would not only duplicate all the data, but also I'd have crystallized some of my major findings from my case-study. Then, my plans continued, through a meeting for a single day teachers would develop my findings into a research effort and they'd be ready to collect data.

A very different time-table emerged, with important ramifications for the study design. By late September I was only beginning to write the proposal for my case-study dissertation. This meant that when the teacher-researchers met with me for a day in early October, I did not open the meeting with a presentation of my findings and with suggestions for subsequent research. Instead I began by asking what they wanted to study. This meant the teacher research project was in their hands--but it also meant the base of my pyramid was fractured from its apex. We were no longer juxtaposing the broader study to the case-studies.





After a full day of sharing, developing and refining possible research questions, the team of teacher-researchers framed their research problem as follows:

## The Thinking Between the Lines

Problem: What do children in grades 1-5 think about immediately before and after writing a first draft? How does the nature and sequence of these thoughts change for children in grades 1-5 between October, February and May of a school year?

Sub-problem:

1. How do planning behaviors before and during writing differ between children, between ages? How do these change over time? Do they appear to vary developmentally or with personalities?
2. What are the units of children's revisions (words, letters, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, whole pieces) and how do these change over time?
3. What do children do with their piece when they revise? Are they adding, taking out, substituting, reordering? Is there a pattern to these revisions?
4. What aspects of a piece do children re-consider or revise (language, content, sequence)?
5. Do children look back and evaluate their drafts? Does this differ with age? with time? Are their assessments global or specific? Do they offer rationales for their judgments? What are they?

The dates for beginning data collection were postponed while teachers worked to develop and practice techniques for collecting data. By late October, the methodology section for their project was written as follows:

## Methodology

### Selection of Subjects:

Data will be collected on 12 children from 5 heterogeneous classes, grades 1-5. The children will not be randomly selected. In order to equally represent both the more and less advanced writers within each class, all children will be asked, "What does a person have to do to be a good writer?" Based on responses to this question, children will be grouped into a more and less advanced group, and 6 children from each group within each class will be used as subjects in this study. The criterion for assessing responses as more and less advanced will be developed by the research team after all children have been interviewed. The criterion may not be the same for all grade levels.

Data will then be collected on 12 children from each classroom with the expectation that 2 of these children may move away or be absent during data collection. The study will, in the end, be of 10 children from each of 5 classrooms.

### Data Collection:

The good writer interviews of all children will be tape recorded and may be used as a data bank on all 200 children to supplement the more extensive data on 50 children.

More extensive data will be collected on the 50 children who are selected as subjects for this portion of the study. The data will be gathered through interviews immediately before and after the children write a first draft. In late October and again in February and May, these children will be asked to tell their teacher when they are each ready to begin a new piece. In a 1:1 conference with each of the children, teacher/researchers will ask the children certain questions. The intention of each question has been agreed upon by the research team, and the teacher/researchers have practiced re-phrasing the questions in several ways so as to help the children understand the intent of the questions and give full answers to them. These are the questions, the intent of the questions, and suggested ways to rephrase each question.

1. What are you going to write about?
   intent: to discover the extent of the child's subject plans, to determine whether the child has focused the subject.
   alterntives: So, you're going to be writing about ______? So, exactly what are you going to be writing about?
2. How are you going to put that down on paper?
   intent: to find out how the child plans to go about writing this. Does he or she plan to begin right away? to work alone? to conference? to begin by writing several leads? to write it as quickly as possible?
   alternatives: How are you going to go about writing about ______? What problems might you run into? So, will you just write and write until it is done?

3. How did you go about choosing this subject?
    intent: to find out not only why the writer chose this subject, but also how. Did he or she consider several? Did the writer list possible topics? Was the topic assigned? Did the writer talk to anyone about the topic choice?
    alternatives: When did the idea for the topic first come to you? Did you just think about it, or what? So, it just came into your head?

When each child finishes a first draft, they will again be interviewed. Teachers will ask:

1. How did you go about writing this?
    intent: to find out the child's behaviors and thoughts during the first draft.
    alternatives: Did you conference with anyone? Did you write it straight through? Did you make any changes?
2. What will you do next with this piece?
    intent: to find out plans for revisions, to find out the writer's ability to conceive of revising it whether or not the writer plans to do these revisions.
    alternatives: What else could you do with this piece if you wanted to? Could you say more about your plans? Will you change this piece?
3. What do you think of your piece?
    intent: to find out whether the child will look back and assess their draft, will this be global or specific, will they offer any rationale, what rationale do they use for their judgments and how do these change?
    alternatives: If the child doesn't offer any reasons, the researcher will ask: "Why do you feel this way?"

## Interviewing

The 5 teacher/researchers have role played, practiced, analyzed and agreed upon interviewing techniques. These include:

1. During interviews, teachers and children will sit together so as to give the impression that there is plenty of time for children to think about their answers and to answer questions fully. Teacher/researchers will not ask interview questions as they stand over a child's desk, or as children stand beside their desks.

2. Teachers will both note-take and tape record interview sessions. The purpose for using both methods to collect data is both so that there are written records as well as tape collections, and also so that teachers will slow down

during interviews, giving children time to answer, yet teachers will not need to be anxious about taking everything the child says down on paper.

3. Interview questions will be repeated and rephrased when needed. Teacher/researchers will also repeat the children's answers and ask, "Anything else?" so as to encourage children to give full answers.

4. The emphasis in the interviews will be on gaining information about children's thinking rather than about their written piece itself. For example, if a child says, "I was going to write about my cat's broken tail but I decided it was too big," the teacher/researcher will not say, "Oh, I didn't know your cat's tail was broken," but will instead say, "So you were going to write on one topic and then you decided it was too big."

Data collection began in mid-November, a month behind schedule . . . and lasted not for a week, as planned, but for a month. State-wide exams and holidays played a part in prolonging this first data collection phase, but a more important problem was created by the fact that the design of the project meant teachers could only interview children immediately before and after writing their first draft of a piece. Oftentimes youngsters would reach the moment when they needed an interview, and their teachers would be involved elsewhere with another child and so the youngster would forge on to a second draft. It was extremely difficult for the teachers to make time for lengthy research interviews at exactly the right moment.

During that initial data-collection phase, several teachers began complaining that attempting to gather data interfered with their teaching. This complaint was to continue throughout the study, and led to several teachers withdrawing from the project--either officially, or unofficially by never completing their data-collection.

Because the initial data collection phase lasted until mid-December, the teacher-researchers elected to consolidate the second two rounds of data collection into one. Prior to this next round of interviewing and observing children, the teachers mot to share their data and to explore possible patterns which may have been emerging. The most important result of this meeting, however, was the realization that despite some efforts to standardize data collection methods, each teacher was getting very different data. The differences seemed to be reflections of the teachers more than of the children. These are some examples of the range of data collected by different teachers.

ROGER KIMBALL 1st grade

-Roger, what will you be writing about?
*Tarantulas
-Tarantulas.
*mmhmm
-You'll be writing about tarantulas?
*Yeah.
-So exactly what will you be writing?
*Well, on the page you mean? Well, I thought I'd write about the banana spider. She's about this big. I'd like to write about that on the first page. Then I'm gonna say they do live in pine trees.
-mmhmm
*I'm gonna say that and on the second page I'm gonna write tarantulas are poisonous. And I like tarantulas because they . . . cause they look neat. They're not neat. They're slobby. And I'm gonna write tarantulas . . . some tarantulas live in holes in the ground. And tarantulas are big and they have lots of legs . . . are big and have two . . . no, four legs. Uuuuh tarantulas are big. I don't know if that's gonna cover the whole page. That's not gonna be all on one page.
-Wait just a minute. That's not going to be all on one page?
*No, not this, the whole thing.
-How are you going to do it?
*I'll put that much on one page. I'm gonna have to put more pages in. I'll need more pages for that probably. I'll need more pages.
-mmhmm. You think you'll need more pages?
*Yeah.
-Anything else?
*mmm, no.

-Roger, how are you going to put that down on paper?
*What do you mean, how I'm gonna put it down?
-What are you going to do once you get your paper . . . your booklet?
*Write it.
-Just write it? You're just going to sit down and write and write and write?
*Yeah.
-Will you have a conference with anyone about it?
*Yah.
-What will you do?
*When I have the conference?
-mmhmm
*Ask them what they think I should add. Whoever I conference with.
-Who do you think you'll conference with?
*John.
-Why?
*Because he listens . . . he don't interrupt.
-You think that's important to listen and not to interrupt?
*Yeah.
-Why?
*Because when the reader's trying to read it upsets him when someone interrupts him and starts fooling around and all that.
-Does that bother you when someone does that.
*mmm

ROGER KIMBALL (continued)

-Roger, how did you go about writing your piece?
*Good
-How did you go about writing it, Roger?
*You mean, how did I write it?
-Yeah, what did you do?
*Well, I had to think about what I said to you.
-mmhmm
*I had to sound the words out.
-mmhmm
*It wasn't that easy. It was hard.
-It wasn't easy?
*No.
-Why wasn't it easy?
*It was hard to spell all those words.
-So you had to think about all those things you said then you had to sound out the words and you thought it was kind of hard to do all that.
*yeah
-Did you conference with anyone?
*No, I forgot . . . cause I had to do math.
-Did you just sit down and write it . . . oh no, you said you had to think about it.
*yeah

-Roger, what will you do with this next?
*the writing?
-Yeah
*Maybe publish it . . . I don't know
-So you think you might publish it?
*Yeah
-Do you think it's ready to publish?
*Yeah. Oh no, I want to color the rest of the pictures in. Some pictures aren't even colored.
-Is there anything else you might do to it?
*Yeah, go over the words . . . make sure they're spelled right. What I think of them. Make sure I got my periods. That's all.
-Is there anything else you might do to it?
*Yeah. Maybe. I might put some more pages init. I might put some more. I'm not sure though.
-What would you put on those pages?
*mmm . . . I don't really know. I would have to think about it. I'd have to have the book right here to know what I was really gonna write. Cause I have to see the book to see what I already wrote.
-That would help you?
*mmhmm.

-What do you think of this piece, Roger?
*It's good.
-Why do you feel that way?

ROGER KIMBALL (continued)

*Cause I spelled the words how I heard them. I had to sound them out. I had to think about what I was gonna write. Nothing much else. Nothing much else that I want to talk about. That's all I want to put . . . well, yeah . . . I just said I might put more in.

-So you think your piece is good cause you spelled the words good and you think you might add more.

*Yeah.

-Roger, how did you choose your subject? How did you decide to write about tarantulas?

*Well, cause when I went to Trinity House Camp to go fishing I saw a pine tree. I saw a banana strider in it. They're black and they got yellow spots in it. They're funny shaped like this. That's all I wanna write cause I'm gonna have a lot on that already.

-mmhmm. So you got the idea from this summer when you were at Trinity House Camp.

*Yeah. And I see spiders in my house.

-What made that idea come to your head right now?

*Maybe because I seen a spider today . . . this morning in my . . . between the mailboxes. There was one and I see a lot of spiders and just because I like spiders. I like all kinds of animals.

Second Grade

1. What do you plan to write about?

   Skiing

   Went on Bunny Hill -- couple of times describes what happened in great detail.

2. How are you going to put it down on paper? (Do you think of any problems you might run into?)

   Will just write what I just said.

   Prob -- keep going on T-bar -- will be boring.

3. How did you go about choosing this subject? (When did the idea first come to you? Did you just think about it?)

   I was just thinking and remembered about yesterday and thought it would be a good story.

4. What do you think of your piece?

   I think it's good because when story is too long it gets boring. A short story keeps everyone interested.

3rd grade

1. What do you plan to write about?

   The Fight

   When me & Brent got in a fight down at the police station.

2. How are you going to put it down on paper? (Do you think of any problems you might run into?)

   I don't know. Just how it was & started.

3. How did you go about choosing this subject? (When did the idea first come to you? Did you just think about it?)

   I couldn't think of nothing else.

4. What do you think of your piece?

   Not too impressed. It's boring.

Grade 4

1. What do you plan to write about?

   My second dog, Mike.

2. How are you going to put it down on paper? (Do you think of any problems you might run into?)

   I'll write about his color and what I did with him.

   I might have trouble with when I played with him and ask my mother and father.

   How long ago did this happen?

   Three or four years ago.

3. How did you go about choosing this subject? (When did the idea first come to you? Did you just think about it?)

   I see many dogs that look like Mike and it reminds me of it.

   I've been thinking about it for a week and I feel I could write about it now. I remember his color, him fighting and running away.

4. How did you go about writing this? (Did you conference with anyone? Did you write it straight through? Did you make any changes?)

   First I wrote that he was my second dog, he was small and his color. I wrote my feelings. I wrote it straight through, then I conferenced with Erin, Michelle and Caroline (individually). Why? I didn't know if I needed another draft or not.

5. What will you do next with this piece? (What else could you do with this if you wanted to? Could you say more about your plans? Will you change this piece?)

   I added and took out words. Why? Some words I didn't need.

   How do you go about adding?

   I read it over and think of the goodest place to put it. (She adds it right on her first draft.)

6. What do you think of your piece? (Why do you feel this way?)

   I forgot to ask this question.

5th grade

1. What do you plan to write about?

   About when we went to Boston.

2. How are you going to put it down on paper?

   Well, first of all the subway ride . . . that's what we did first. And then I'm going to write about what we did in Quincy Market, and then we went over to see some art place . . . it wasn't the Museum of Fine Arts . . . it was some other Art Museum.

   Are you going to write about everything you did that day?

   No. I'm going to write about it all first, then I'm going to pick which part I like best.

   Oh, write about the whole day first?

   Yes, then pick it in parts and make stories in parts.

   Then pick it in parts?

   Well, like pick out parts that are good and uh . . .

   And what are you going to do with those parts?

   Put them, make them into a short story, and if that's too long, just take out other good parts, that are good.

   Can you think of any problems that you might run into?

   . . . no, not really.

3. How did you go about choosing this subject?

   Well, I was going to write about it the day we came back, but I wrote about something else . . . another subject that was better.

   When did the idea first come to you?

   While I was in Boston.

4. What do you think of your piece?

   It's okay. I made a second draft.

   Your second draft is better?

   Yeah.

Why?

I'm not finished with this. Well, I took out the things I really didn't need.

How do you feel about it?

Well, this one's OK. I think the second one's a lot better.

Why do you feel that way?

Well, I think it's not so long and in the beginning it's not so boring cause I started out . . . I just wrote "Here comes the subway" instead of telling about the subway station.

5. How did you go about writing it?

I wrote it through first and I conferenced with some kids. It turned out to be a long story.

Did you make any changes?

Yeah, I started another one.

What do you mean "you started another one."

I started another draft . . . to shorten the story. I took a new paper and wrote a new story so I could shorten it. On the other paper I crossed out things I didn't need and then I wrote it over again.

6. What will you do with this piece? (next)

First I'll have to reread my draft because I haven't done it for a long time and then I would try to start writing . . . pick it up where I left off.

What could you do with the piece if you wanted to?

I guess I could just rip those . . . just throw those other ones away . . .

No, I mean what could you do to the piece to finish it?

Finish it? I'm going to write more. What I was going to say before was forget about those stories and write a whole different one . . . on Boston . . . same main idea, but . . .

Meetings were held to discuss methods of data collection, but two or three of the teachers resisted the amount of time the research was taking.

"I can't help thinking I'd do more for the kids by spending afterschool hours planning for tomorrow," one of the teachers said.

"The research is interesting but I find it impossible to keep up," another said.

The feeling I had was that several of the teacher-researchers were continuing with the project only because they'd promised me they'd participate in it. In March, I called a meeting of the research team, and surveyed the teachers to learn whether they were interested in the project. Three of them said they'd rather focus exclusively on their teaching, two of them were eager to continue in the project.

That meeting was 15 months ago. Two of the teachers completed the project, and one of them, Mary Ellen Giacobbe, has written two articles based on the data from the project. Those articles are included in this final report.

Another teacher, Marilyn Boutwell, joined the faculty at Atkinson Elementary School when the research project was drawing to a close. Marilyn became interested in doing classroom based research, worked with me on devising a project, and she, too, has completed an article and recently submitted it to Language Arts. That article is also included in this final report.

## Section 2

## Review of the Literature

> It's an exhilarating time to be a teacher, especially one interested in language...
> Whole wagon trains of pioneer teachers, researchers and thinkers are penetrating the continent of language, mapping its mountain ranges and rivers, discovering and opening new territories...and claiming fertile valleys.
>
> -Walter Loban (1972, p. 20)

Children's writing development is one of those new territories; the area has never been mapped. Only as we explore it, only as we learn the lay of the land, will we know the sections which need closer study. For now, pioneers into the field of writing development need to ask broad questions, and they need to be ready for surprises. King (1978), Emig (1980) and Graves (1981) have suggested questions such as these:

> How can the learners' processes of writing be characterized?
>
> How does writing function for the child? What are its purposes?
>
> How do teachers respond to pupils who are engaged in writing?
>
> What is the nature of the reading act in relation to revision?

Teachers have questions, too. Here are some raised by New York City teachers. Their questions come from a different perspective, for teachers are the pioneers who travel by foot rather than by wagon train:

> How do children who speak English as a second language learn to write?
>
> In what ways do my children use strategies when they write which are similar--or different--from strategies they use during science? during reading?
>
> How do teachers change when they begin to write?

They are all large, open questions--questions which suggest areas to explore rather than hypotheses to test, questions which ask what teachers and children can do in natural settings, rather than what they will do in unnatural ones. In her book, A Study of Children's Thinking, Margaret Donaldson (1963) confirms that these are the kinds of questions researchers need to ask early on in the history of a field:

> Clinical studies should come first and guide the statistical ones. The shortcomings of clinical studies can at any point be made good by statistical ones; but the statistical inquiries which have not been preceded by appropriate clinical studies may be so misguided as to be useless or positively misleading. (p. 34)

Making a similar point, Hedda Bolgar emphasizes that case-study may be especially suited for a field such as ours. In Wolman's Handbook for Clinical Psychology, she writes (1965), "Whenever an investigator approaches a new area in which relatively little is known, the case-study is his first methodological choice."

Although we can surely benefit from any study which is well done and wise, in a field as young as research on children's writing development, we especially need clinical and case studies, saving the formal and controlled studies for later, when we know what questions to ask and the context in which to ask them. Until we observe children closely without the rigidity of a standardized procedure, we will not know what behaviors to count, what evidence to gather, what variables to control.

Despite the good advice, writing research has had trouble acting its age. Like the 9 year-old who tries to act like her 16 year-old sister, writing research has often taken after its older sibling; reading research, a field which Marcia Farr (1980) from The National Institute of Education describes as being 50 to 100 years older than similar writing research. Something is lost when we hurry through childhood, and this is true for research as well as for people. Many claim the field of reading never had a childhood, that it bypassed the early exploration stages--and the same thing could happen to writing research in its rush to find questions which fit neatly into experimental paradigms, with their controlled variables, statistical data and short-run observations. Writing researchers have for a long time been warned against bypassing exploratory case-study research. In 1929, Rolly Lyman wrote, "A complex phenomenon such as composition seems to defy careful analysis into constituent parts." He reported that regretfully, studies prior to 1929 "measure pupil products and assume that by doing so they are evaluating the manifold processes of the mind by which these products were attained" (p. 274).

More than 30 years after Lyman's plea, when a committee of the National Council of Teachers of English met to analyze existing research in composition, they recalled the 1929 assessment of research in writing and reported that research since Lyman led essentially to the same conclusion (Braddock, 1963).

> Some questions which seem fundamental in the teaching and learning of written composition have gone almost untouched by careful research. (p. 52) Composition research, then, is not highly developed. If researchers wish to give it strength and depth, they must re-examine critically the structure and techniques of their studies. (pp. 5-6)

Two other Needs-in-Research summaries, published about the same time, also recommended reconsidering the design of writing studies so as to give more attention to developmental issues and individual differences (Meckel, 1963; Parke, 1961). Meckel specifically advocated case-study research.

> There is a great need, therefore, for case-studies that will throw light on the relationship of different facets of personality to writing behaviors. (p. 1004)

Yet still, writing researchers were slow to listen to these recommendations. There are probably many reasons for this, including:

1. Case study research is costly, both in terms of time and money. Whereas data-collection for experimental research often involves just a few weeks, well known case-studies in education have involved years (Piaget, Halliday, Bissex).

2. Researchers in writing have tended to be short on both time and money. There are two reasons for this. First, as Graves documented (1978), most writing research has been done by dissertations. From 1955 to 1972, for example, 84 percent of all studies in composition were done by dissertation alone. Graduate students are rarely rich in either time or money. Second, until recently research funds for writing totalled less than one-tenth of 1 percent of all research funds for eduation. For every dollar spent on the teaching of writing, 100 of more dollars were spent on the teaching of reading (Graves, 1978).

3. To engage in ethnographic case studies, researchers

must leave the ivy towers of a university and spend a great deal of time in classrooms. Many researchers seem reluctant to do this.

4. For many years concern was directed more towards the teaching than the learning of writing. Between 1955 and 1972, for example, Graves (1978) calculates that 68 percent of all writing research was concerned with what teachers do during writing. Like the other factors, this one may be changing. The Paris Review Interviews, combined with other recent descriptions of what writers do during writing, seem to have helped researchers realize that not only teaching writing, but writing, contains observable, identifiable, and significant behaviors.

It was Janet Emig who really broke the ground for us all. Her dissertation, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders (1971) earned its place in history because, for the first time, a researcher had documented what students actually did during writing. Her findings include a description of two modes of composing, which she called extensive and reflexive, as well as descriptions of component behaviors in the writing process. Since Emig's seminal research, these behaviors have been renamed and redescribed, year after year, by researcher after researcher--her categories are far less important than the fact that someone had documented what students do during writing. We were on the right track.

Graves' case-study of 7 year-olds came next (1973), and like Emig, Graves was interested in what writers did during writing. But his study differed in important ways--ways which have continued to set his work aside from that of other researchers in the field.

1. Whereas Emig (and since then, many others) investigated the writing of young adults, Graves was interested in what children do during writing.

2. Whereas Emig (and since then, many others) observed students on only a limited number of occasions (four), Graves' study involved observing students several days a week for four months.

3. Whereas Emig (and since then, many others) observed writers outside the natural settings of their classrooms, Graves became a resident observer in two schools and four classrooms in a suburb of Buffalo.

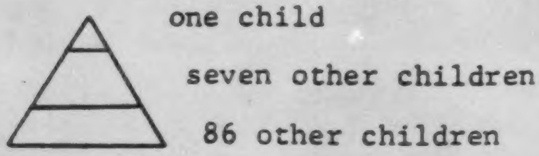
Graves' study sought insights into the relationships between teaching and learning, and into other big, open ended questions about writing development. What are the differential effects of formal and informal learning environments on the writing development of children? How do boys and girls differ in writing? Can developmental factors be identified in the writing process?

Graves' findings (1973) challenged some long-held notions about children's writing. For example, he concluded that children do not need direct motivation or supervision in order to write, and that classrooms which assign children to many writing tasks inhibit the range, content and amount of writing done by children (p. 235). As Emig had done, Graves developed profiles of two types of writers; for Graves they were the reactive and the reflective writers (p. 236).

But for Graves, as for Emig, the findings have proved far less consequential than the nature of the investigation. Petty, chairman of Graves' doctoral committee, wrote this about Graves' work (1978):

> I think the most promising finding of the study was that the case study method of research is a most effective means for determining the variables that seem to bear upon a child's writing.
>
> Because Graves did case-studies of eight children, he was able to identify behaviors common to all of those children...as well as ones unique for each child. From this comparative base, he was also better able to interpret and assess both the writing processes and the written production of the other 86 children studied less intensively.

Petty was describing Graves' design, a design which we refer to as a pyramid. His research can be diagrammed like this:



Since the ground-breaking research of Emig and Graves, there have been others who have used some variation of the case-study method to investigate the writing process. In a case study of a 17 year-old, "Clarence," Mischel (1974) replicated Emil's design. Like Emig, Mischel compared "school-sponsored" writing with "self-sponsored" writing and found that more time was spent planning when the writing was "self-sponsored."

Stallard (1974) used interviews, observational checklists and an analysis of students' written products to compare the composing processes of "good" versus "less able" twelfth graders. Again, he compared time spent in planning, writing and contemplating the product. Not surprisingly, he found "good" writers planned more, stopped more to review what they had written, and revised more.

Pianko (1979), like Stallard, compared good and less able writers. Through observation, video-tapes, and interviews, data was collected on the students, each of whom composed a 400-word essay on five different occasions. Again, Pianko was interested in the number and length of various writing behaviors. Most students wrote only one draft, and most engaged in minimal planning.

Revision was the focus of Sommers' case study (1978). Some of her subjects were college freshman, others were experienced writers. She contrasted their writing behaviors with their stated concerns for revision. Her study, along with Perl's, argues against a linear stage-theory of revision, claiming revision is recursive. Not surprisingly, the experienced writers in Sommer's study attended to larger units of discourse and revised more frequently than did the college freshman.

Matsuhashi (1979) also timed writing behaviors, working with four "competent" high school writers while they wrote two reports, two generalizations and two persuasive papers.

Perl (1979) used case-study to trace the composing processes of five unskilled college writers. The students met with her for five 90-minute sessions, during which they wrote on assigned topics. Data include tapes of oral composing, transcripts of interviews, and the written products themselves. These have been meticulously coded so as to reveal patterns of movement, resulting in a very persuasive and well-written argument for a recursive theory of the writing process.

Less than 10 years ago, when Graves wrote the Review of the Literature for his dissertation, he could refer to only one previous case-study in writing. How quickly things have changed! I have already mentioned eight case-studies, and there are others (Flower and Hayes, Bissex) I have yet to discuss. "What a wealth of material you have to draw upon," someone might think. And yet the case-studies I have discussed were helpful mostly as something to define myself against. From them I have learned what this study will not be--and learning that was an invaluable lesson.

I do not mean I have spotted "the weaknesses" in their studies. Instead, I've seen the trade-offs they have made and determined to make different ones.

On the whole, these case-study researchers tried to bring some of the strengths of formal research into their studies. In doing so, they avoided some of the problems and many of the possibilities of case-study research. I do not want to make these trade-offs. Not this time.

Most of the researchers (I exclude Graves from this), observed their subjects under controlled conditions. Subjects wrote away from the distractions of other writers, in a room set aside for the research. They wrote for predetermined lengths of time, on topics assigned by the researcher, with a tape recorder running beside them.

By controlling the conditions in these ways, the researchers did not give themselves the chance to learn what happens when writers work alongside each other. They missed out on seeing what happens when writers select and write on topics which are important to them. They never saw the way the writers would organize their time, if the schedule was in their hands. In short, the researchers missed out on the chance to see what students can do as writers. For the students did not work in contexts which are conducive to composition.

Then, too, many of the case-study researchers compared the processes of beginning and experienced writers; but none of them showed how the one becomes the other. Their studies are snapshots, not motion pictures. None of them involve longitudinal studies; none of them show the interrelationships of teaching and learning. In short, they did not document growth in writing.

In the field of writing research, we need studies which show how students grow as writers--for as educators, isn't our principal concern to understand how people grow, and in doing so, to understand how we can facilitate that growth? It is this territory--how children grow as writers--which I want to explore, mapping its mountain ranges and rivers, discovering and opening its new fields.

* * * * * *

In this study, I approach my topic through the theoretical paradigm and the research model which I will call "the growth model." In order to gain a sense of bearings as to how this model fits into the broader context of writing research, let me step back and view the field, not in terms of unique individuals and their unique projects, but rather in terms of the theoretical paradigms which seem predominant.

A word of caution. Categories are not integral to the field. I am, instead, superimposing my categories onto a changing flux of writing research. They are a way of seeing, but as Burke says, "Any way of seeing is also a way of not seeing." I am well aware of the limitations of any categories. And I know that in this instance, some folks will find themselves with strange bed-fellows indeed, and for this I apologize.

Consider this. The field of writing research can be viewed in terms of these different theoretical paradigms:

- the discourse model
- the writing process model
- the cognitive model
- the transactional model
- the growth model

Neither the members nor the nature of these categories are fixed. Many researchers are redefining the categories within which they work; others are shuttling between two categories, or bailing out of one in favor of another. In general, there seems to be rising interest in the three latter categories.

## The Discourse Model

The roots of "current discourse theory," as this approach is often called, run deep into the history of civilization. As early as the first century B.C. in Sicily and in Greece, there were attempts to categorize modes of discourse. Aristotle supplied the categories which rhetoricians, through the ages, adapted and transformed.

Recently there have been new attempts to categorize discourse. Kinneavy (1971), D'Angelo (1981), Corbett (1981), Britton and colleagues (1975), Moffett (1968) and others have challenged traditional categories of rhetoric and proposed new ways of classifying discourse. Although their interest in categorizing products of discourse dates back to Aristotle, these researchers are taking into account new considerations. Many of them draw upon communications theory, deriving their discourse categories from the various possible relationships between the message, the encoder, the decoder and the referent. Also, there is a growing interest within current discourse theory for categories which emerge from studying discourse products as they are, rather than deriving categories based on an idealized vision of what discourse should be. Finally, many researchers from discourse theory are showing a new interest in the writer's purposes, and their categories reflect their understandings of these purposes.

Kinneavy's work (1971) is an example of current discourse theory which both draws on communications theory and emphasizes the writing purposes. He suggests that the nature of discourse depends on whether the purpose of that discourse is directed towards the reality talked about (referential discourse), towards eliciting a reaction from the decoder (persuasive discourse), towards discharging the encoder's emotions (expressive discourse), or towards building a text worthy of attention in its own right (literary discourse). He claims, "The aim of discourse determines everything else in the process of discourse," and separates discourse into the four categories based on different purposes.

My problems with the current discourse paradigm are evident in my argument with Kinneavy. Like others in the paradigm, Kinneavy does not base his categories on what writers say and do and think. To me, it seems ironic--even outrageous--that Kinneavy views purpose as central to discourse, yet instead of relating purpose to the thinking processes of writers, he infers it from an analysis of products. Then, too, I find it problematic to divide discourse into such neat categories. Why not cut the cake differently and divide it into nine categories, or 19, or 99? Are not the divisions arbitrary? When I look at my own writing, I find that within any one text, I weave between each of Kinneavy's categories, rarely choosing one to the exclusion of others.

Moffett (1968), another researcher from this paradigm, also draws on communications theory in forming his Spectrum of Discourse (Recording, Reporting, Generalizing and Theorizing). Moffett speaks of the varying distances in time and space between the writer, the subject and the audience--a notion which seems worth investigating, but through observations of writers at work, rather than solely through an analysis of finished products.

The London researchers (Britton et al.) derive their categories from actual study of hundreds of pieces of writing collected from secondary schools. These researchers view the students' texts in terms of a continuum which stretches between transactional and poetic writing, with expressive writing as central.

Here again, categories are problematic for me. Are the three really so separate? Does not good writing--of whatever kind--draw upon the strengths of each category? Yet it would be unfair not to acknowledge that for Britton--more than for most others in this paradigm--the categories were meant to be functional rather than ontological. They were a way of analyzing written products, and the categories matter less to Britton than the findings to which they led him, findings which were a cause for some alarm to Britton. He found firstly that students were writing primarily for the audience of teacher-as-examiner, and secondly, that a very small percentage of their writing was expressive. These findings have led Britton to make eloquent and inspirational pleas for classrooms in which students learn language through using it in interactive and purposeful ways, and in which expressive writing is central to the curriculum. Here is one of those pleas, part of a speech entitled The Humanity of English (1972):

I want to start by saying the most fundamental and

> universal kind of learning for human beings is learning from experience which means bringing our past to bear upon the present. To do this, we need to interpret, to shape, to represent experience. (p. 41)

The Writing Process Approach

"The process of making meaning with written language cannot be understood by looking backward from a finished page," claims Pulitzer Prize winning writer, Donald M. Murray (1981). He adds, more graphically, "Process cannot be inferred from product any more than a pig can be inferred from a sausage" (p. 3). This is the premise which underlies not only the writing process approach, but also its offspring, the cognitive approach, the growth approach, and an adopted child, the transactional approach.

Although it has been only in the past 15 years that the writing process approach has emerged as a theoretical stance, seeds were probably planted as far back as the seventeenth century when scientists and logicians began to view knowledge as a process of discovery, a heuristic, rather than as the presentation and application of age-old wisdom. These historical foundations of the process-approach have been described in an article by Young and Becker (1981):

> During the Renaissance, under the influence of Bacon

> and Descartes, logic increasingly came to be seen not as the art of learned discourse, as it has been since Greek times, but as an instrument of inquiry...Since the seventeenth century, we have increasingly regarded facts and experimental evidence as the basis for sound argument, rather than relying--as did our ancestors--on the wisdom of the past. (pp. 131-32)

The writing process approach is more directly rooted in testimonies writers have made about how their texts evolve--both in their minds and on their pages. Perhaps the most signficant of these is a series of books, Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews. Along with these, journals, autobiographies, manuscript studies and letters have all combined to offer a very different picture of composition from that found in discourse theories, past or present.

And so in the late 60s and the 70s, many books and articles were written about the composing process, and their messages were based on these premises:

1. We can study and describe the writing process. It involves more than magic, it also involves identifiable stages and observable actions.
2. No matter what the genre of writing, no matter what the audience may be, writers usually work--in their own unique ways--through the identifiable stages of the writing process.

In 1969, for example, Murray wrote:

> The publishing writer--novelist, scientist,

> historian, journalist, scholar, adman, poet--passes through an identifiable cycle of craft, a ritual of process.
>
> The writing process can be studied...Students of writing have a vast resource of writers' journals, letters, autobiographies and manuscript pages which document how writers work.
>
> Yet despite such evidence we rarely build our language arts curriculum on what most writers have had to learn and practice.

In the same article, Murray addresses each of three stages in the writing process. He describes prewriting as "everything the writer does before he begins his first draft," then says, "at last the writer passes from prewriting to writing," and finally, when the draft is complete, the writer rewrites.

Although Murray was careful to note that writers may have to cycle back through earlier stages in the process, those of us who read his descriptions tended to bypass these asides. As is usually the case, when we first define something we over-define it. And so most people from this paradigm viewed the writing process in terms of somewhat discrete stages through which writers pass in a linear fashion. Gordon Rohman (1965) identified three stages: prewriting, writing and rewriting. James Britton (1978) also identified three: conception, incubation and production.

In 1979, Applebee was not alone when he announced, "It is quickly apparent that the process has a number of distinct stages. At the simplest level, these include prewriting, writing and editing" (p. 6).

Although researchers did not agree on the number or the names of the stages in the writing process, publishers leapt onto the notion of discrete linear stages. By now every new composition textbook in the field is proving that it is modern through having little sections on pre-writing and revision (editing and revision are typically lumped into one section with the former consuming the latter). Writing programs have mushroomed, many based on the notion that Monday is for pre-writing, Tuesday is for the first draft, Wednesday is for rewriting.

Partly in response to these somewhat discouraging educational practices, writing process researchers--including many of the case-study researchers we discussed earlier--have rushed to emphasize that the writing process involves overlapping rather than discrete steps, and that it is recursive not linear. Nold (1979) writes:

> Planning, transcribing and reviewing are not linear processes, as composition textbooks would have students believe. Rather, the text grows and changes; planning, transcribing and reviewing what has been written occur in irregular patterns. (p. 2)

Murray refers to the work of case-study researcher, Perl, when he writes (1981):

> Perl's work enabled me to see an instantaneous moving back and forth during the writing process. Minute by minute, perhaps second by second--or less at certain stages of the process--the writer may be rehearsing, drafting, and revising, looking back and looking forward, and acting upon what is seen and heard during the backward sensing and the forward sensing.

One can only hope that these new and crucially important insights will be incorporated into textbooks and curriculums as easily as were the earlier ones.

Before I move on from this approach, I want to acknowledge this is where my roots lie. Because as a researcher-in-writing I am a child of the 70s, because I consider myself a writer, and because my closest colleagues and dearest friends are Donald Murray and Donald Graves, much of what I have seen in children's writing has been filtered through the transparent templets of the writing process approach. For a long time when I watched children at work, I looked to see whether they rehearsed, drafted, revised and edited. I wanted to understand what each of these processes meant for the child. In time, however, I found my interests had switched onto the children in and of themselves. Rather than seeing them in terms of the writing process, I found myself observing their strategies, their concepts, their interactions with each other and with their texts. Above all, I was observing their growth as writers.

## The Cognitive Model

The researchers from this paradigm are also interested in strategies, concepts and processes. But whereas I consider the thinking and behaviors of a writer as embedded in intentions, cognitive researchers seem to equate intentions or the will-to-write with a writer's translation of an assigned topic.

The best known members of this group, Flower and Hayes (1980) and Bereiter and Scardemalia (1980), are engaged in quite different projects, but share a similar perspective. The former are best known for their work with protocol analysis and for their resulting model of the writing process. The latter are best known for their analytical look at the cognition involved in oral and written composing, and for the battery of ingenious little experiments they have devised to test what children can and, more to the point, cannot do as writers. Let's look at the first group, then at the second.

Whereas Frank Smith likens the writing process to giving birth (1981) and Glenda Bissex, to the growth of an organism (1981); the metaphor Flowers and Hayes use is that of computer-processing. When I think of a child at work, leaning low over a tattered page, then sitting back in the chair to call out proudly, "Want to read my story?" I simply cannot see this in terms of retrieval of information, long and short term memory, monitors, and storage of information. Yet these are the terms Flower and Hayes use.

I agree with Sondra Perl who said (1979):

> I get worried when we borrow too quickly from the computer sciences, a model of the mind that is narrow and mechanistic. I believe that we store or hold or carry knowledge within us, but I want that storing or carrying or holding to include not just our brains but our bodies. I want it to include our recognition of an embodied or felt sense. I emphasize bodies first because that is where we encounter certain kinds of knowledge most directly--we feel it; we know whether a word is right...because we sense its rightness quite literally in our bodies.

In raising issue with the metaphor Flower and Hayes have used to describe the writing process, I question not only the words they use but also their way of gathering data on writing. Rather than watching writers as they work on self-initiated writings in environments which are conducive to composition, these researchers gather data in what they describe as laboratory settings. Their subjects work on assigned topics, and they are expected to voice their thinking as they write.

Although I fight fiercely against the metaphor Flower and Hayes use, and question the contexts in which they learn about writing, I nevertheless credit these researchers, and the Canadian team as well, with providing a fresh analytic look at the actual processes which many of us used to glibbly describe as rehearsal, drafting and revision. For example, what is rehearsal? The term, in and of itself, has little meaning. Flower and Hayes have dug beneath these composite terms and tried to illuminate the cognitive processes involved in composition. They have, for example, described different kinds of planning and shown ways planning interacts with other processes (translating and reviewing). "Plans are, in a sense, the writer's defense against the very nature of writing and its deluge of constraints" (1980, p. 43), they write, showing how plans can reduce the demands for a writer's attention.

This sort of analytic look at composition, for all its limitations, does help account for some of the complexities of writing. I have learned from insights presented in Flower and Hayes' work and will continue to do so--but I will also continue to translate them into a more organic and human context.

Bereiter and Scardamalia, I think, make a similar contribution to the field of writing research. For example, they have noted three kinds of planning which are common to both conversation and writing (1980b):

1. local planning--mainly involved in planning the next conversational move
2. preparatory planning--mainly involved in planning utterances to be used at future points in the conversation

> 3. global planning--dealing with general principles, strategies or biases that apply to many local decisions. (p. 35)

But there are problems to this team of researchers. One big one, I think, is that the results of their intricate little experiments do not reflect what children are capable of doing. At the Ottawa Conference (1979) and in an article published since then (1980), Bereiter explained a task he asks children to do. They are to write, and at each sentence break, they are to stop and choose from a pre-determined list two possible opening phrases for their next sentence and then compose two alternative sentences, each using one of the openers. After those sentences are written, the child is to choose the better one, and continue to write another sentence. When that sentence is written, the youngster is again expected to choose two possible sentence openers...and so on. I could hardly follow this complicated battery of procedures! However, based on the children's performance on this task and others, Bereiter made observations about a child's ability to plan (1980b).

> Almost no instances were observed of sentences being chosen because of their value in reaching a goal or because of their contribution towards filling out some plan. (p. 36)

Of course, the children weren't engaged in planning;

they were continually being interrupted by the researchers!

Bereiter, I am convinced, has no real knowledge of what children can do because he does not watch them working within the matrix of their own intentions. For example, when he says children below the age of 10 do not have the cognitive ability to do much revision beyond the sentence level (1980b, p. 74), he is wrong.

In another study, Bereiter asked students in fourth, eighth and twelfth grades to write a description of a design for three different audiences. When fourth and eighth graders failed to provide necessary contextual information to the most generally defined audience, Bereiter concluded that students must be in grade 12 before they can meet the needs of a "generalized other."

In a review of the cognitive approach to writing, Newkirk questions the conclusions Bereiter reaches through his experiment. Newkirk writes (1982):

> But what are we to make of the failures of the 4th and 8th graders? Do they fail because they are developmentally incapable of perceiving the information needs of a general audience? Or do they fail because they have had no practice and instruction? Is 12th grade some kind of threshold? Or is it the age when students, poorly instructed in writing, finally puzzle out the demands of a general audience? If, as some surveys indicate,

writing in Canadian secondary schools is primarily note-taking and copying, the failures may be simply due to lack of practice. And studies of this kind say more about schools than they do about students.

Perhaps the most articulate critique of research such as that done by Bereiter is found in the work of Howard Gardner, a developmental psychologist. In his book, The Arts and Human Development (1973), Gardner writes:

> The specimens of children's art work, the quality of youngster's stories, the folk-singing of second graders in a Kodaly classroom remain the most impressive testimony to the skills and abilities of the young child. It is lamentable that psychologists have made so little progress towards fixing and understanding the nature and development of these artistic proclivities. (p. 179)

Gardner claims his findings

> are bolstered more by the experience of watching children, contemplating their works, and considering the components of the artistic process than by experimental evidence. While the empirical evidence does not refute my contentions, the pressures of the experimental situation, the difficulties of communicating instructions, all mitigate against producing a revealing and comprehensive picture of the young child's abilities. Only in a relatively unstructured situation, where the child has

> materials at his disposal and is essentially able to use them as he sees fit, can the aesthetic aspects of his behavior emerge...Ultimately, I feel that conclusions...will have to be drawn from longitudinal studies of children involved in play and the arts. (p. 174)

## The Transactional Model

Someone once told me, "The best way to define your approach is to locate the researchers whose approach is closest to yours, and then differentiate your approach from theirs." And so I will try to articulate ways in which the growth model differs from the model used by Jerome Harste and Frank Smith, two of the writing researchers I most respect. I will also mention the recent work of Janet Emig and Ann Berthoff, for both are probably members of this group as well.

Harste and Smith both came only lately to writing research, and they both came by way of reading research. In the field of reading, they both had a "top-down" approach to print. They both were interested in ways reading involves prediction and confirmation, pushing ahead and pulling backwards, cues and mis-cues. They both saw the reader as actively building meaning out of a transactional relationship with a text, or, in Harste's words, with a "print setting." Both used the metaphor of man-as-scientist to illustrate the active way in which readers build, test, and refine their hypotheses; constructing theories and then projecting them onto printed texts, which in turn shape their theories. Harste and Smith, along with others from this model, continue to be interested in the transactional processes through which meaning is constructed, only now their interests involve the writer as well as the reader.

In his most recent book, Writing and the Writer (1981), Smith focuses on "the mutually modifying interaction during the act of writing between the writer and what is being written." He shows that when people write,"we put our theory of the world to work; we find out what we know and think and therefore we can develop to alter our thinking" (p. 33).

Harste also views writing as a means for theory building/ theory testing, but whereas Smith's subject is the fluent, mature writer, Harste's is the pre-schooler. When Harste's 3 year-old writes by making lines of small circular shapes, the child and the research gain access to the youngster's theories of print, theories which will be revised as they are expressed and used.

Both Harste and Smith, then, share Emig's interest in writing as a mode of learning. All three of these researchers describe the act of writing and show ways in which writing is an effective tool for learning because it is active, engaged, personal, and self-rhythmed, because it involves reinforcement and feedback (Emig), theory testing (Smith), and hypothesis testing (Harste).

A second parallel between Harste and Smith is that both emphasize that readers and writers generate meaning through two-way interactions with a text. Smith says:

> I have talked about writing almost as if the text were a mirror, reflecting back upon writers what writers themselves produce, as ideas develop in the act of writing. I have also talked about reading as if the text were a mirror reflecting in the other direction. (p. 87)

Harste is less interested in talking about reading and writing as mirrors and more interested in using the mirrors produced by preschoolers to learn about these young print-users. But the premise beneath his research is similar to the theory Smith expounds. When Harste looks at a 3 year-old's writing, his interest is in that writing as a reflection of what the youngster knows. His methods often involve paying careful attention to what others might dismiss as error, and also, providing children with the greatest possible number of cues to help them generate meaning from and alongside of print. For example, Harste examined the differences in preschooler's responses to these two different sets of instructions:

1. Would you write your name and anything else you can write.
2. Would you draw a picture of yourself. (and then, only after the drawing was done)

Would you write your name.

The different requests, it turns out, set into motion different expectations for the children. When simply asked to write, the 3 year-olds produced a picture. When asked to draw, and then after that to write, the result was first a drawing and, as if in recognition that something different was being asked for, a primitive sort of writing. Harste reports that if you give these young children different utensils for writing than for drawing--a pencil for writing, a crayon for drawing--this will also help to cue them to differentiate between drawings and writing. In ingenious ways Harste and his research colleague, Carolyn Burke, try to explore preschoolers' early reading and writing in order to understand what they already know, and to see what strategies they use in their growing control of written language.

Although both Smith and Harste have come to writing out of a background in reading, I suspect that for both of them, their real interests lie in neither one camp nor the other, but in the interface between them. "How do people use language to make meaning?" is the question they both ask. They both speak of the reader/writer as one who constructs theories in order to make sense, conducting experiments to test the theories. When a theory doesn't work, it is revised and that is called learning.

Differences between the transactional and the growth models do not emerge from conflicting theoretical notions; persons from both paradigms share fundamental beliefs, including these:

1. an interest and respect for the intentions, past experiences and knowledge which each print-user brings to the act of reading and writing.
2. the view that writing is not a specialized kind of thinking, but a highly effective means in which to carry out the theory-building, theory-testing process which characterizes all learning.
3. the belief that as teachers, our role is to help students become engaged in activities which _they_ care about and then to help learners achieve _their_ goals.

Despite these fundamental similarities, there are also subtle differences between the two paradigms. Whereas people from the transactional model are interested in the act of reading-writing, people from the growth model are interested in how readers and writers change over time.

This difference leads to other differences. For example, although Harste's research, like ours, emphasizes the importance of observing writing as it occurs within meaningful contexts, _contexts_ means different things to the two research teams. For Harste and Burke, a meaningful context is provided when the researcher supplies the child with a variety of converging meaning cues. For example, such a context exists when the child reads the word CREST from the toothpaste tube rather than from a sheet of paper. For Graves/Sowers and me, context has a broader meaning. We are interested in observing children's writing as it takes place within the drama of their classrooms. We view the context of a child's writing as encompassing the comments the child said upon arriving in school that day, the nature of his work in clay and blocks, the ebb and flow of his friendships, the interactions with teachers and researchers...even the guinea pig that lives in the back of his classroom.

The different interpretations of context reflect differences in research projects. Haste and Burke's N.I.E. funded research involves asking 48 children to perform 5 simple tasks. They meet with children on several occasions so as to tease out the nuances of what each child knows about print. Graves/Sowers and I, on the other hand, are involved in longitudinal ethnographic research projects in order to learn how children change as writers. Each little nuance of what a child knows at any given moment is less important to us, for our concern is with patterns which emerge over time.

The different orientations of the two groups leads to differing involvements in instruction, and perhaps, different stances towards teaching. Neither Harste nor Smith focus on how children learn within classroom contexts which are supportive of growth. Neither their data nor their interests directly involve the relationship between teachers and children. When Harste and Smith do talk about teachers, their main message seems to be to encourage teachers to observe children, and to stay out of children's way.

Whereas researchers from the growth model share this trust in children as the active agents of their own learning, we are either more interested in--or more trustful of--ways teachers and parents can interact with children to facilitate their growth as writers. Because Harste and Smith are more interested in the act of writing than in growth in writing, they are less interested than we are in the contributions good teaching can make to the process of learning to write.

## The Growth Model

Researchers who view writing from within this paradigm draw upon a rich heritage of developmental research, reaching back to Rousseau, and including Piaget, Bruner, Donaldson, and Vygotsky, all of whom build on the evolutionary notion of growth as a process through which equilibrium are replaced by gropings and experimentation, followed by new equilibria. Whether the focus is on the infant learning to reach, the toddler learning to talk, or the youngster learning to write, growth is viewed in terms of challenge and response, of problem-finding and problem-solving, of assimilation and accommodation.

In 1966, at the now famous Dartmouth Conference, educators from Great Britain, the United States and Australia sought to translate this model of growth into a stance towards teaching English. The stance was grounded in a concern for student-centered education, for learning rather than for teaching. New emphasis was put on using language within interpersonal contexts--and on using it not only as a means to communicate, but also as a means of knowing oneself.

Seeds for the growth-model of writing research may have been planted at the Dartmouth Conference; or perhaps the seeds lie outside the field of English Education, in the developmental people themselves and in work done in other fields, such as Gardner's study of symbolic development (1980) and Halliday's studies of oral language development (1965).

Because researchers from this model view growth as an ongoing process, we tend towards longitudinal studies. In her immensely significant book, GYNS AT WRK, Glenda Bissex (1981) documents her son Paul's growth in writing from when he entered literacy at the age of 5 until he reached the age of 9. And in our study, Graves, Sowers and I observed first and third grade children for two years, thereby mapping how the children changed between first and fourth grade.

Because researchers from this model view growth as occurring within the matrix of learners' own intentions, we tend to observe writers as they work on self-initiated projects, on projects which have meaning to them. And so Bissex's story of Paul's growth in writing begins with the youngster writing a message to her, R U DF (are you deaf?) and then shows 5 year-old Paul writing animal names onto a homemade board game, writing a birthday card, and attempting a Snoopy newspaper. Bissex clearly shows Paul's growth in writing as a product of his own changing intentions. She writes, early in her book:

> I am documenting here everything I recorded that Paul wrote during his first weeks as an inventive speller to try to convey the rapid flourishings and evolution of that development. Does merely presenting all these writings convey Paul's absorption in the activity? The hours of intense concentration over pen and paper, or sitting at the typewriter? He was not playfully experimenting but focusing so earnestly on his self-set task that the house was at once hushed and electrified by the tension, with its triumph and tears. (p. )

Articles from our study, like this section from Bissex's book, show growth in writing as it happens within contexts which are meaningful to children. Kamlar's article (1981), based on our study, shows second grade children interacting with each other around the writing:

> Jill went to her cubby for a piece of cake, then to the window where she and Debbie shared cake, talking

> and laughing, arms around each other. Then Debbie claimed her turn, "O.K., Jill, you help me now!" They...returned to the language table to work on Debbie's book, Ice Follies, until Mrs. Eagan was ready to see Jill 20 minutes later. (p. )

Kamlar's article--and other work which draws upon data from our study--shows writing as it occurs in classrooms which are supportive of growth in writing. Whereas Kamlar was describing a second grade classroom, Graves' articles especially show growth in writing as it occurred within Giacobbe's first grade classroom (1979, 1981). Lessons from a Child shows growth in writing within a third and fourth grade classroom. Bissex's book, on the other hand, focuses on growth in writing as it occurred in the Bissex home.

Because studies from the growth model view growth in writing as a process of challenge and response of equilibria and change, work by Kamlar, Bissex, Graves, Sowers and me will show writing within interpersonal contexts. Lessons from a Child is not only the story of Susie, but also of two teachers, of a classful of third graders who turned into fourth graders, and of a researcher.

## Section 3

# READING AND WRITING PROCESS: A RECIPROCAL AGREEMENT

By Marilyn A. Boutwell
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Atkinson, N.H.
September 1982.

# READING AND WRITING PROCESS: A RECIPROCAL AGREEMENT

Eight year old Heidi twisted her thumbs upward through the bottom strands of string wound between her hands.

Marissa peered at the string closely. "That's not an Indian cradle, Heidi. It's all twisted and crooked."

"Lemme see." Laurie held the open book next to Heidi's string. "It's supposed to look like this. See? Let me start the directions over."

Russ hurried to the far side of the classroom. "I'm done with this book. Want to conference with me?"

Giffy's eyes widened. "Done? But how? Those were hard words."

"No problem," he grinned. "I skipped the hard ones. If you skip them and keep going, it makes sense, you know. It makes you read faster, too."

Russ and Giffy huddled over the book together, stopping to chat about each happening, Giffy trying to guess what comes next in the story, and skipping big words.

My third grade writers didn't read passively anymore; they were active, planful learners. Less than a year ago, Calkins showed me how powerful and contageous the energy is that comes from writing process. The energy was evident in our classroom writing workshop. But now the energy overflowed into my students' reading. We were swept along in its power that bonded us closer and closer into a community of strategic readers as well as writers.

## A Partnership Formed

These eight year olds didn't question this involvement. It was just there and growing. Their teacher did. I was afraid it would disappear as suddenly as it had come. I needed to see what was going on "inside" their heads--the things unsaid--to understand. I decided to become a researcher within my own classroom and conduct a case study. Juggling research and still attending to 28 children could be a problem, but their enthusiasm as readers demanded answers.

I chose Marta. We formed a partnership, this eight year old and I. I offered her a tape recorder and blank tapes.

> Just tape your thoughts aloud as you read, write and conference with others. I'll come around once during reading and once during writing workshop to ask you three questions: What are you doing right now? What are you wrestling with? and, What do you plan to do next?

When Marta discussed her role in this project, she said,

> It was our project. I felt so glad I was helping you look....It made me feel it was a project for us.

And it was.

Our project reminded me of an old fashioned arcade contraption. The kind you slip a nickel into a slot, crank up the levers and a bucket shimmys down and clamps onto one of the treasures inside. If you ease the bucket around just so, the treasure will fall down a shute and into your hands.

I'd inserted the nickel. Marta handled the levers. Every night I'd play the tape to see what treasure she'd given me; each one a strategy she discovered as a tool to understand and make sense out of what she read and what she wrote. Her awareness of such powerful tools came first in writing. Marta became a strategic reader of her own writing.

### Reading as a Writing Strategy

> I'll write just anything that sounds good. Then I reread it to see if it makes sense. If it doesn't, then I know I've got to do something about it.

Reading was an important part of Marta's writing process. She jig-jagged back and forth from writing to reading, rewriting to rereading. Marta, the writer, would pause, switch to a reader and consider the text. Inevitably this would lead to a spurt as a writer again. The writer made tentative decisions in constructing her story to convey her message. As a reader, she checked to see if her decisions made sense. If they did not, then Marta, the writer, reached for alternatives. The writer flowed; the reader contemplated.

One day Marta wrestled with crafting her draft to make sense. Through rereading the bothersome section, she realized the words she chose did not make the image clear for the reader. She revised by adding new words to her text.

> I wanted to tell my readers what the area in my story looked like; but it was a hard decision on what to say. I sort of imagined what it would be like. Then I imagine what that looked like. I tried to picture it in my mind. And that (points to her revision) is how I pictured it.

Rereading, as a writer's strategy, led to awareness of places where words did not convey intended meaning. This third grader took a look at her writing, and without hesitation, began to rethink--revisualize--what she had originally meant to say. The revision came and Marta, the reader, congratulated herself.

Sometimes rereading of her writing did not lead to an adding on, or rewording, revision strategy. Instead, Marta discovered that a deletion of information was necessary in order to make sense for the reader.

> I was thinking when I made that part up, that was too much. But I thought, this is what I do when I get writing. I take down too much information about what I do instead of what the story's main character would do.

Marta, the writer, responded to the question she raised as a reader. She revised her writing to meet the challenge of making her character true to her story. Double checking her revisions wove into her strategies--reseeing with an objective eye. Rereading occurred at different times and different places. A part once revised and celebrated, received another look from Marta's own reader-perspective later on. Rereading her text freed her as a writer to choose from various writing strategies to meet the demands of making sense for her readers.

Newkirk (1982) states that young writers as critical readers do not "accept the writing on its own terms." Moreover, "Lacking this power, they are polite readers. Like good guests, they do not ask impertinent questions." Marta did ask the questions and she responded to them.

## Writing as a Reading Strategy

Strategic reading was a integral part of Marta's writing process early on in third grade. But by the spring of that school year, her energy flowed into reading stories written by professional authors. When Marta encountered confusing parts, she reread them. This strategy sprung from the same question as in reading her own writing, "Does this make sense?" Sometimes rereading worked; often it did not. It led to frustration, such as in a difficult chapter in Lynn Anderson's I've Always Loved Horses.

> What does this mean? Should I read this part over again? I felt like I was rereading every part, so I decided it was not my kind of book.

But Marta met this frustration with an alternative strategy--write about what she had difficulty understanding.

> Well, what I do is I just start writing, in my words, what I think it was about. And in my way what it was about.

Like becoming a reader of her own writing, Marta became a writer of her own reading. With this connection, a reciprocal agreement between Marta the reader and Marta the writer, she created a bridge constructed by strategies she could apply to both reading and writing. Marta became a revisor of her reading. Marta read in spurts, as when she wrote. She paused to reread troublesome areas, as she paused to reread parts of her own writing. She questioned if her reading made sense; if it didn't, as in writing, Marta revised it for clarity. Sometimes clarity came as Marta deleted words the author used that held no meaning for her; sometimes understanding came as Marta added to, or reworded, what the author had written.

When Marta completed rewriting the troublesome section of the book, she said,

> I'd like to say to Lynn Anderson, the way she said the tips--'the better the coat, the shinier the coat,' and the examination part about the horse was very clearly done. If you were to get a horse, you wouldn't have any trouble at all. Her writing was so good. But maybe a little more detail in the 'I Can Remember' part is needed--the beginning of the book.

Calkins (1979) describes writing "as hands on thinking--rewriting as thinking about thinking." For Marta, "hands on thinking" extended to "hands on reading." As Marta read, she considered choices to help her make sense of the author's intended meaning. She revised her reading by rethinking and clarifying the meaning for her as a reader. Conferences played a real part in the writer as reader and reader as writer strategies.

## Reading and Writing
## Conferences

Conferences permeated our classroom during reading and writing. Each day during our hour long reading time, children clustered together to share their discoveries. There was Heidi, Marissa and Laurie in one corner of the room wrestling with rereading directions; across the room, there was Giffy and Russ spontaneously reading together. Each day during our hour long writing time, children gathered to celebrate their stories, or wrestle with making their drafts clear to others.

I'd gained a glimpse of the thinking and rethinking process that goes on "inside" one of my eight year olds' heads. I continued to pour over the data to see the impact conferences had on their reading and writing process'. Marta's tapes showed she often used writing conferences to confirm that other readers could understand her writing, like when Leah responded to Marta's final draft of her horse story,

> "I can tell you put a lot of work into it!"
>
> "Yes, and there's plenty of problems that I had to work out. I'd get the information and go to another part. Like I'd finish one problem and lead myself into another one," Marta chuckled.

Marta reminded me of someone standing on a granite ledge far above the treeline and shouting, "This is me! Do you hear?" The echoes would tumble down into the valley and roll through the mountains, only to return whole, as if in answer, "Yes, we do!"

Sometimes Marta sought out writing conferences to get a nudge to tackle a problem that loomed before her. Response searching was a way for her writing voice to become grounded to the reality of her story's readers. In a group conference on her first draft about our classroom Leprechaun day, Marta asked for responses on what didn't work, not on what did.

> I don't want to hear if it sounds good. I want to hear if you think there's any part that sounds confusing.

Her answer came from Brian.

> I thought a little of it was confusing 'cause we came back from gym and we have a treasure map. You didn't tell that! We walk into the room and we have a treasure map. Presto!

There were limits to being a reader of her own writing. Marta became aware of the power of conferences.

> Sometimes I can get help from some other people, 'cause sometimes I don't know if my writing did or didn't sound good. And they really can't understand it. I can understand it the most; some other people can't.

But sometimes Marta resisted the nudges she received. When her friend Susan said one part of Marta's fiction story sounded like a commercial, Marta replied angrily, "I know! But I'm not conferencing that part!" Two days later, she reconferenced for Susan's opinion on her revision.

> "I'm glad you fixed that commercial part," Susan laughed.
>
> "Me, too," Marta giggled.

The data showed that the purposes of reading conferences coincided with those in writing. When my students clustered together during reading time, their conferences consisted of a series of nudges and confirmations to make sense out of the written material. Marta returned Susan's favor in the commercial writing conference with a reading conference. As they struggled to pull some sense into the words that were strung in scientific language beneath a variety of photographs on horse breeding and care, I shook my head. "How did that magazine get in here? It belongs in a veterinarian's office." Susan's donation led to a lengthy conference with Marta. They paused, argued, giggled, and went on.

> "I thought it was fun," Susan smiled. "I didn't know what the words were, but I thought it was a baby horse."
>
> Marta laughed. "We conferenced to understand what we were reading. Susan would tell me her opinion and I would tell her mine."

Gatherings over books were purposeful. Questions sprung from unfamiliar pages. Young writers wove the questions into meaning. Marta discussed the growing awareness that came from questions.

> The questions in reading make me remember better. I ask them to me if I read a part and I didn't understand it. I'd ask me a question and try to find a way to answer it. What does this mean? So I could ask someone what it means.

Reading and writing conferences helped answer questions that Marta the reader and Marta the writer could not. Conferences provided an alternative where students could ask for help and share their individual strengths as readers and writers. Once Marta was aware that she didn't know what something meant, or if it made sense, she was then free to find answers.

Brown (1981), a researcher, describes the importance of the "in-head" process as,

> If children are aware of what is needed to perform effectively, then it is possible for them to take steps to meet the demands of a learning situation more adequately.

Marta's awareness seemed to come from her own questioning and was grounded to reality by her conferences. I discovered the importance and power of this awareness as a researcher in this project. But I was also discovering my role as a teacher. My students could learn from each other and I wanted to help them discover situations where this interaction could occur regularly.

## Reading and Writing Workshops

When my class gathered on the blue carpet in September, I told them, "We are each an expert at something. We'll share our expertise in here." They'd only stared back at me in a silence that said, "What does she mean?" But it didn't take long for these eight year olds to discover their expertise in writing process workshop. Their activity filled the classroom.

Drafts took on odd shapes with revisions tacked onto the sides of yellow lined paper; arrows wove pathes up and down the pages and onto new sheets taped below. Russ joined Ted to get help with dialogue--Ted's expertise. Joe instructed Brian and Kevin on sound effects in stories. Children gathered in small groups to conference their emerging stories and celebrated them in large group share meetings. When meanings to their text weren't clear, they met the challenge with renewed energy and care. Students were involved with their own individual endeavors and with those of their classmates. We ran mini-lessons together. Some were to confirm what a writer discovered as a new strategy that others might use; other lessons were provided by me to nudge my students in their search one step further. Free writing time, mini-lessons, and share meetings filled our writing workshop times.

The children didn't just write, they were writers. As they shared their individual expertises, everyone's writing benefited and their ability to craft stories grew.

Reading workshop evolved along the same principles. I designed it with the elements I'd wished were present for me as a child. I read to my students daily--things I felt they should be aware of. As with writing topics, the children chose their own materials to read--aloud, silently, together, or alone. We discussed our readings to see what we'd found. Talking and sharing were encouraged; but not just about the content. We'd guess at story endings, guess at meanings of new words, and discuss how events reminded us of our own experiences. The children shared discoveries they'd found to make reading easier. They searched for words to explain things they read that surprised, confused, or excited them. We concerned ourselves with the process of reading as we did in our writing.

The rules fell into place. As with writing, if they chose something and decided to abandon it, they had to say why. Whenever they completed something, the children were to share it with someone else. Quiet voices were a must. And if something was hard to understand, we explored it together; if not, we celebrated why. Certain students became identified as good guessers; others became experts at big words. Expertises were acknowledged and borrowed freely.

Free reading time, mini-lessons, and my readings filled our reading workshop time. Russ led a mini-lesson on skipping--a new expertise he'd acquired during free reading time. Share meeting featured Giffy who explained how he'd solved Scruffy's dilemma

when the dog was trapped on a burning roof, "Before the author even told me!" The girls showed me their string cradle when I stopped by to conference. "You can't always skip things," Laurie giggled. They didn't just read anymore, they were readers. And they shared their growing expertise.

Through my research I discovered that the elements of reading and writing process were much the same: ownership over the material they chose to involve themselves with; an awareness of the strategies they used; and conferences to share their expertise either to celebrate what they discovered, or to nudge them further to discover more. They were a community of learners teaching one another.

## The Power of Becoming Researchers

The data showed the energy to be an involvement and an awareness of learning. The project revealed to me what strategic learners these third graders had become. I wondered how the research had affected Marta and worried it had burdened her.

> Sometimes when I had to change a part, it was confusing to explain it--what I was trying to do. It happened to me a lot....I feel like, 'How do you say that question?' This research has helped me a lot with my writing. Like helping me understand it....I don't think I have as much control with my reading as I do with my writing.

Marta's ability to identify the questions she asked herself and relate them as she thought aloud helped her use strategies with more control. Placing her thinking process on tape increased her awareness. The project had become a tool for her to gain more effective control over her writing, and to a lesser degree, her reading process. Recording her thoughts on tape was like recording her thoughts into writing--more accessible to contemplate and revise. The project encouraged her to rethink and resee her strategies she used to make sense out of written language. She selected from these strategies to resolve her dilemmas in learning.

I had often wondered why other students continually requested tape recorders "like Marta's." At first I had thought the novelty of it aroused their curiousity. Perhaps they knew that taping her thoughts helped her become a more strategic writer and reader. Toward the end of the project, gatherings at her recorder had increased--occassionally they circled around her and replayed the tapes. When the project ended and I took my recorder home, Marta replaced it with her own. It had become a recognized tool for gaining control over the process she had once kept "inside" her head. Marta had come a long way from "helping me" with "our project;" she had become her own researcher and was helping herself.

Donaldson (1978) says,

> If the intellectual powers are to develop, the child must gain a measure of control over their own thinking and he cannot control it while he remains unaware of it.

Marta gained this power in reading and writing workshops through sharing her discoveries with others. She gained even more as her own researcher through placing in words, on tape, her own thinking process during reading and writing.

I had thought of this partnership as a way for me, as a teacher, to gain insight into and control over the energy level my students had in their reading. I now recognized the importance it held for my eight year student. Classroom research need not be separate from children's learning in class--it can be a part of it. It's usefulness had extended itself beyond our partnership and touched the rest of the class. They responded by becoming drawn to it and more actively involved. I did not have to limit research to a single case study next year, or order 28 tape recorders. The research would be a classroom community project. We would seek out new discoveries of our learning process together.

I will continue to explore the power of ownership, conferences and awareness of strategies in our reading and writing workshops next year. We will extend this search into other subject areas. I will encourage my students' learning much as a conductor would lead an orchestra. They will handle their own instruments as I try to encourage their best efforts to blend into a distinct harmony. Donaldson (1978) explains such teacher-student interactions as,

> ...exercise such control as is needful with a light touch and never relish the need...if the ultimate aim of the control is to render itself unnecessary, if the teacher obviously wants the children to become competent, self-determining responsible beings and believes them capable of it, then I am convinced that the risk of rejection of learning will be much diminished. We come back thus to the question of whether the teacher truly respects the children and let's them see it.

Through this project I'd gained respect for my third graders' responsibility toward their learning. We will continue to research and share our process of becoming better learners together.

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Section 4

# Research Update
## Questions for Teachers Who Wonder If Their Writers Change

Donald H. Graves
Mary Ellen Giacobbe

How hard it is for teachers to tell if their writers improve! The growth of young writers is often erratic: On Monday poor writing, improvement on Tuesday, an excellent day on Wednesday, an average day on Thursday, poor writing again on Friday. The teacher leaves school on Friday wondering if anything significant has happened during the week, even though such a pattern is a normal one for most writers. She wonders where to begin on Monday morning.

Since the growth of young writers in the short term is both uneven and erratic, new questions need to be asked that will give teachers a picture of child change in the long run. There are subtle changes of a more fundamental nature that can show teachers significant change, even in the midst of a child's struggle. Teachers who ask process questions not only gather sound information about child growth, but also ask the very questions that contribute significantly to the growth of the children themselves.

### A Teacher Who Found Out for Herself

Mary Ellen Giacobbe, a first grade teacher in Atkinson, New Hampshire, wanted to find out how her children's concepts of the writing process changed from December through the end of the school year. Underlying her interest in concepts were simple questions: "Are my children improving as writers? If so, how?" She formulated many of her interview questions with Lucy McCormick Calkins, who had a grant from the NCTE Research Foundation to help teachers conduct their own research.

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Donald H. Graves edits Research Update on behalf of the National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Research.

### Rationale for Questions

For three years Giacobbe met several times weekly with each of her children to discuss their progress as writers. She was aware her six-year-old children often made penetrating statements about their writing, even though the writing was not necessarily going well at the time. She noticed that as children broadened their ability to plan, to solve problems, to use a language to discuss their writing, and to sense options for the writing process, their writing products ultimately changed for the better.

Giacobbe knew the products improved each year. This was easily documented in writing conferences and the children's writing folders. She needed information, however, that showed where the children were in understanding the process, so that she might have data to help them from day to day during writing conferences.

She framed a six-month period of teaching with questions that were asked before and after children wrote in December and in June. Ten of her twenty-three children were interviewed about their writing process, and transcripts were made of interviews with copies of writing photocopied to show the relationship between child concepts of writing and what happened in the writing itself. These ten children were distributed along low, middle, and high performance levels in writing. The following questions were asked of the children:

*Before They Wrote:*
1. What are you going to be writing about? (Children chose their own topics throughout the year.)
2. How are you going to put that down on paper?
3. How did you go about choosing your subject?

*After They Wrote:*
1. How did you go about writing this?
2. What are you going to do next with this piece of writing?
3. What do you think of this piece of writing?

Although these questions were asked in standard, formal fashion, Giacobbe didn't hesitate to ask further questions that promised additional information.

Two of the ten children are now reported to show more detailed profiles of change in writing. The two children are chosen from the high and low groups to show contrast. Teachers will see the types of information questions elicit as well as changes within and between the two children. Each case is reported in three sections to monitor child change through questions: information, process, and standard.

Although all the small changes between the two dates in December and May are not available, the information will be discussed in light of data from our study of children's composing from ages six through nine (see *Language Arts*, "Research Update," 1978-1982).

### Mark

Mark was chosen in December to represent the lower group of children. At that time he was barely able to read his invented spellings. It was not easy for him to talk about his work or writing; composing was a slow process where he struggled for the right letters to spell out his pieces.

#### Information

In December Mark is asked what he will be writing about. As in speech he goes directly to the subject: "School . . . writing and building and all that. Math, science, art." When Mark composes he has to lead into his subject from home base, a home-to-school narrative, a practice quite com[illegible] in December with other children. [illegible] writes:

> I am in t[illegible]use.
> We are going to school
> Mrs Young dropped off the other kids at the Academy.
> We are going to Rockwell. (His school, next stop on bus run from Academy.)
> We are getting off the bus.
> I am playing.
> The End.

Marks' entire text gets him *to the subject* discussed orally. It is difficult for any writer to get into a subject. Noting how writers get into their subjects is a fruitful way to view the change of writers at any age.

By June, Mark's use of specifics has changed dramatically, both in his preconception of what will be contained in the writing, and in the writing itself. The same question asked in December about what will be contained in his writing brings a different harvest:

> Chicks . . . I might just write like what I know about chicks and I might write that one just hatched at about eleven past ten. I might write the day that it hatched. I might write that a chick just hatched a couple of days ago . . . that a chick hatched last night. I'll keep on thinking about it and I'll just think and I'll find out what I'm going to write.

Mark's sense of options changes from December to June. He is now familiar enough with both writing and his subject that he might exercise any of these options in writing: what he knows about chicks, the one that just hatched at eleven past ten, the day it hatched, or the chick that hatched last night. Any time children speak of different directions in content, process, or standards, there is evidence of a significant growth unit. Once children realize there are options before them in information or process, they take on greater problem solving capacities, as well as greater access to the specifics that make their writing more detailed.

In June, with his sense of many options and rich information, Mark moves quickly to his subject when he writes:

> A chick hatched on Tuesday. The whole class was happy. I was happy the first chick hatched. I wanted to hold it but it was too small. You have to wait for two days when you can hold them. They will nibble at your finger. In two days they will nibble. It doesn't hurt when they nibble. One chick nibbled my finger until my finger got a cut. The cut didn't hurt. I was scared when he nibbled at my finger. We are trying to hatch eggs in our school but they hatched on yesterday, June 2, 1981. The chicks are wet when they hatch. If you wait for two days they will be grey. They will be fluffy too. That is when it is fun to hold them. I holded a chick. I had never holded a chick. It felt weird. It squiggled. It got out of my hands. I chased it all around John's house for a half hour. Finally he finally it stopped. It was too tired to run anymore. I finally got the chick. It tried to get away again and it almost did but it didn't get away. The End.

Mark's text follows in many directions with each sentence stimulating the next. His understanding of options doesn't mean he entertains one in the midst of four. Rather, Mark finds that each sentence mysteriously leads to the next; there is usually an option around the corner to be followed. Although Mark expresses what he will write as optional, in fact, he uses all of his options in the text. This is a necessary precursor to the child's stopping and making a decision about which option to entertain in the midst of composing. Thus, Mark's statement of options or "might" is really a statement of the suspected twists and turns in his piece about chicks.

Mark is able to show himself more in the June piece. His voice is present in feelings, surprise at what the chicks do: pecking, squiggling, running around the house. Mark has more access to himself in June than in December.

### Process

The first element in Mark's process of writing is the process he uses to choose his subject. Note the difference from December to June:

> *December:*
> I just wanted to write that. Cause I like school. It just came to my head.
>
> *June:*
> I just thought about what we've done. I thought about dinosaurs first. And I thought about butterflies and chicks. We studied about food and shells. Then I decided the chick one.

In June Mark has chosen one of six options for his topic. He is used to the question, to having access to how he goes about choosing his topic. Children who have such options rarely see themselves as being without a writing subject. Best of all, they learn to exercise intelligent choice on subject limitation. They learn about what they know.

Giacobbe found out more about Mark's process by asking him about his composing before and after writing. Before writing in December, Mark said:

> I'm just going to take the paper and write it down. And then I'll write the picture of it. I write the picture first and then I write about the picture because I like to write the picture first because if I mess up I can just make something out of it. If I mess up with crayons I already drawed on something I can make that part of it.

Mark already has a clear sense of process in December. He is aware that he draws (before he actually composes) and that he is able to transform drawing errors into sensible solutions. He also makes little distinction between the process of drawing and writing, a common understanding of many children Mark's age. He *writes* them both.

In June, Mark's statements about process appear to be regressive. Now that he does little drawing to go with the writing, his language seems vague in comparison with December.

> *Before:* How he will write: "I don't know . . . in words. That's all I can think of for now."
> *After:* How he did write: "First I thought what I was going to write and I just thought and thought."

Children Mark's age consistently move from specifics about the process to such general statements as "I thought and thought" as they develop greater internal language. It isn't long before the general statement "thinking" is replaced by more specifics about the process again. "Thinking" comes at the point when children use less speaking to accompany the writing process, yet they lack for words to describe the internal process. They are simply aware of a change that can only be expressed as "thinking." Later, they will see an external counterpart in what they actually do to describe their writing processes.

The future, however, is much more definite. When Mark is asked what he *will do* with his piece in June, there is great difference from his December statement: "Publish it." In short, the piece is done at the time of the interview. In June, Mark has a *continuing* sense of what will be done with his writing:

> Probably get it published. I might sit down and work on it a little bit. Turn it over and erase the things on the back that I have and write some new stuff.

> Write new stuff about chicks. I might take this piece and just look through and see if it's chicks or ducks cause I had to chase one of John's ducks too. That even took more than an hour. I might change some of it to ducks.

The future is open. Mark will go back to rework his piece with some adjustments needed in the information. The piece still exists for more work.

Giacobbe has carefully developed a future for the children by asking them throughout the year, "And now what will you do with your piece?" But the question has come after continuing to have a conference about what the child still knows about the topic even though the child has "completed" the piece. It is the child's choice whether the information is used or not. Of course the child's time frame of working on the process changes as a result of such procedures. The piece about the classroom in December took one sitting whereas "Chicks" was carefully composed over three days. Even though the piece took longer in June, Mark still has more to say about what he will continue to do with his writing.

### Standards

At the end of each interview, Mark is asked how he feels about his piece. Much of his standard in December is taken from the comments and help given by others: "I think it's good. Because when I conferenced with Justin they said it's good. They thought it should be published too." He gives few specifics of his own about why it is good. It is good enough to be published. (About one in four booklets composed by the children is published in hard cover in the room. This amounts to an average of one book every four weeks for each child in the school year.)

In June, Mark had a much more elaborate statement about his thoughts on the quality of his writing: "I think it's good. It's one of the best pieces I have. When I read it through it sounds good. When I read through all my pieces, they all sound good." Mark had just completed a strong, fantasy piece called "The Great Race." He is feeling that most of his selections are good after having two good ones in a row. Mark then goes on to make another statement about standards, one quite typical of children six through nine years of age who are wrestling with issues of "real-unreal."

> This is better than "The Great Race" because it has more information. Anyways, that didn't really happen in "Great Race." I just imagined all of that. This is better because it is a real story. Real things really happened. Make-up things didn't really happen.

For children coming to terms with what is real, not real, true, untrue, the "real," the new realization takes on greater importance and therefore greater merit as a written piece for Mark.

### Lauren

Lauren was chosen as one of the subjects because in December she composed in the more advanced group in the class. She was articulate in speaking about writing and the writing process.

### Information

In December Lauren tells far more than she writes. By June she has shifted to writing more than she tells. At first Lauren used the response to the question "What will you write?" as a rehearsal for the text composed. In December there is little difference between

Lauren's oral response and what she composed on the first page:

> *Oral:*
> Well, one time when we were coming home from our boat and Candace was going to sleep over my house we couldn't do it cause I was getting too crabby. Then my brother was allowed and he fell down the stairs with his tape recorder and his book and he broke his wrist.
>
> *Written:*
> Once when we were coming back from the boat Candace was going to sleep over my house but I was too crabby. Then Bobby fell down the stairs. He slept over anyways. He went to my house. Then he went to the doctor and got a cast on.

Lauren selects only the material *first* shared in telling about what will be in writing. Forty-eight of the seventy-three words written in the selection came from the first seventy-five words of the oral account of what would be written even though Lauren shared 246 total words of what would happen in her writing. Part of this is because Lauren, like many primary children, started out with great detail on the first page (forty-seven words) but ran out of energy, and quickly closed in traditional fashion with simple subject, verb, object sentences:

> HE CAN RIDE HIS BIKE.
> BOBBY IS BETTER NOW.
> BOBBY IS AT SCHOOL.
> HE CAME BACK FROM SCHOOL.

Each of these sentences occupies only four or five words to the page. They are a similar pattern to Mark's lead from home to school and back again with only one sentence about school itself.

In June there is much less of Lauren's oral account in the writing. Like Mark, as will be shown in the process section, she is aware that she will discover new options in the composing; an oral rehearsal is much less needed. Table I shows the shift from oral to written.

Even though Lauren's genre had changed from a narrative account to an informational—"all about" writing, she takes the information and attempts to produce small narratives within the article about her family boat. Each page has an illustration to go with it.

> ABOUT MY BOAT
> p. 1—My boat is neat. I like my boat. Under a cushion ther's a toilet under it.
> p. 2—We go on my boat in the summer. Our boat isn't next to their boat. There's another boat between them.
> p. 3—One time our friends came on our boat. Sometimes when they go out with us.
> p. 4—We have a new marina. They put the docks out. My father is putting the boat into the water. I asked my mom if we could go on the boat tomorrow. She said maybe we could.
> p. 5—I like my boat. Our boat has a

Table 1

Percentage of Oral Account in Writing
December and June

| | No. words in oral account | Word information units in writing from oral | Word length of written account | % of written made up from oral account |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| December | 246 | 48 | 73 | 66 |
| June | 153 | 35 | 129 | 27 |

> hatch. Sometimes I stick my head out the hatch. But sometimes my father tells me to put my head back.
>
> p. 6—There is a sink in our boat. We went on the boat yesterday.

There is an epi narrative of her friends, the new dock and the hatch. There is no strong narrative or coherent approach to writing about her boat. Different features have their personal appeal—the toilet, the marina, friends, the hatch, and the sink in the boat. The piece unfolds, and in a sense is less coherent than the December narrative. Working with a non-narrative account is much more difficult, however, especially when the writer tries to include a personal voice.

### Process

Process statements give the strongest indications of Lauren's growth as a writer. Note the change from December to June in her two accounts of how she will compose:

> **December:**
> Keep on adding pages. I might have a problem if I get mixed up. Yeah, I would. But I don't think I will. Maybe tomorrow I'll have time to do the whole thing, instead of doing other things like clay.
>
> **June:**
> I might add or I just might take some out. I just might write the pages. If I ran into problems I could just think what we really did and erase that and put what we really did. Sometimes I get mixed up; I'm really not thinking.

In December Lauren chooses to complete all writing in one sitting. "Maybe tomorrow I'll have time to do the whole thing." This also shows why her big splurge of information on page one was followed by such simple sentences with data less relevant to her topic. She had exceeded her time limit set for writing. The only way out was to end the piece in simple sentences.

In June there are more specifics to Lauren's process. Lauren might "add, take out, erase, rewrite, put what we really did." In the developmental hierarchy of writing "taking out" information is an advanced concept. It is not unusual for children to cite addition of information, but subtraction is another matter. This means that a child has decided something is irrelevant to the main idea. By June, Lauren has a much richer problem statement, whereas in December "she might run into problems but probably won't." When children come up with options in information or process, they also come up with much richer statements about anticipated problems. The two must go together or the writer will be in great difficulty. There are too many children who are strong readers who can cite problem options but are without the information and process options. That situation usually leads to a child who is unhappy with writing.

Lauren's statement about how she actually composed in June shows even more about her understanding of process:

> I forgot to put in my mother. I forgot to put that so I had to erase for more room. I had more information but it was hard to put in. I put an arrow up here to say that. I saw you (Giacobbe) do that when you showed the boys and girls what you do when you leave something out of you writing.

Lauren has picked up on her teacher's strategies for inserting information and applied them to her own writing on a self-directed basis.

Lauren has also expanded the time-space dimensions of her process understandings. First, she composes over a longer period in June (three days as opposed to one day). Second, she returns to reexamine the text to insert new information. Third, even at the point of the interview for this study she still has designs on how she will continue to work with her piece; she still wants to check to see if it is "mixed up" in any way. To check this problem she will take the staple out of the corner of the papers, spread the papers on the floor, and look from page to page to put the information in the right order.

### Standard

In December Lauren feels the piece is good because, "I like it. I really want to publish it because it's about the best so far. I like it. It's a good book. It's good because I just thought about it this minute and it's good." Like most children starting out, Lauren thinks it is good because she just "feels" it is the best. She is not yet conscious of criteria to apply to the piece. Teachers need to be cautious about children's understanding of what is good. Even though children cannot come up with specific criteria as to what is best, they usually do choose the best paper. Criteria *come after* they are able to choose best papers.

Lauren's standard in June has more specifics, with some understanding of the effect of her piece on the other children.

> I like it a lot. It makes me feel good. That's what makes it a good piece but it may not be to other people. (Thinks it is important that it be good to other people.) It is good because it has a lot of information in it. I told a lot about my boat. I think I want to write even more.

Lauren has introduced feeling as a criterion, but with feeling backed by information. She also has a sense of continuing standard since she wishes to keep working on her piece to make it better.

### Final Reflection

Teachers ask questions to find out how children change. Questions about the writing process show how children change most because responses are rooted in the underpinnings of child thinking and development. Children's perceptions of what they write and how they write it are data teachers can't do without.

The challenge to the teacher is making sense of the information the children give when responding to questions. Will the teacher know growth when it is present, even though the child may be struggling with his or her piece? Teachers should look for: the child's use of detail, ability to talk about the subject, sense of *option*, tentativeness of judgement, and growing language to talk about the process of writing.

Questions themselves contribute to child growth if asked on a regular basis. Most of the questions, however, are asked because the teacher feels the child knows the answer. Although Giacobbe's question activity in writing conferences between December and June is not part of this study, the use of questions in conference is a regular pattern in her teaching. Her records show regular conferences with children (about three per week). Conferences are spent in receiving, discussing, and questioning the children about their work. The object is to help children teach her about their subjects and to discuss the process by which they compose. From our previous study (see *Language Arts*, "Research Update," 1979-1981) it is clear that the conference, plus questions, produce reflection and a language of option and process in the children.

Children grow because they become

aware of what they are doing, then forge on to tackle new issues in their composing. Questions make an important contribution to that awareness. Teachers become aware of where the child is from the questions and ask further stretching questions. Children, in turn, become more confident about where they are in the writing process, and take on more challenging issues in their composing.

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A Dasalated Poeb

Id ain'd do fud to hab da flu
Maidly 'cos dere ain'd dothin' to do
'Cept sid id bed
Ad close your eyes
Ad rest your head
Ad dere you lies . . .
I - hab - to - sdeeze—achoo!!!

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to be published in a
book edited by
Newkirk + Atwell

Section 5

# A WRITER READS, A READER WRITES

Writers are readers. As a teacher of both subjects, I always knew children were both writers and readers. But it wasn't until I was doing a case study on one child's writing progress that my attention, given to writing and revision, was soon to be shared with the kinds of reading the writer did in order to make revisions. What follows is an account of Tommy and his changing concerns as a writer along with the evolution of the kinds of critical judgements he made as a reader of his own text.

Six year old Tommy is a writer...a creator of text. During his first year of school he wrote two plays, many explanations and descriptions for art and science projects, numerous math problems, and countless letters and notes to friends and family members. He kept a journal during the first month of school. He also wrote twenty-six stories, nine of which were published by the school publishing company.

Tommy kept a collection of his stories in writing folders at school. He had a folder for work in progress and one for accumulated work. This paper will focus on his collection of writings and more specifically the pieces Tommy evaluated as being his best. We will focus on the development of Tommy as a writer-reader.

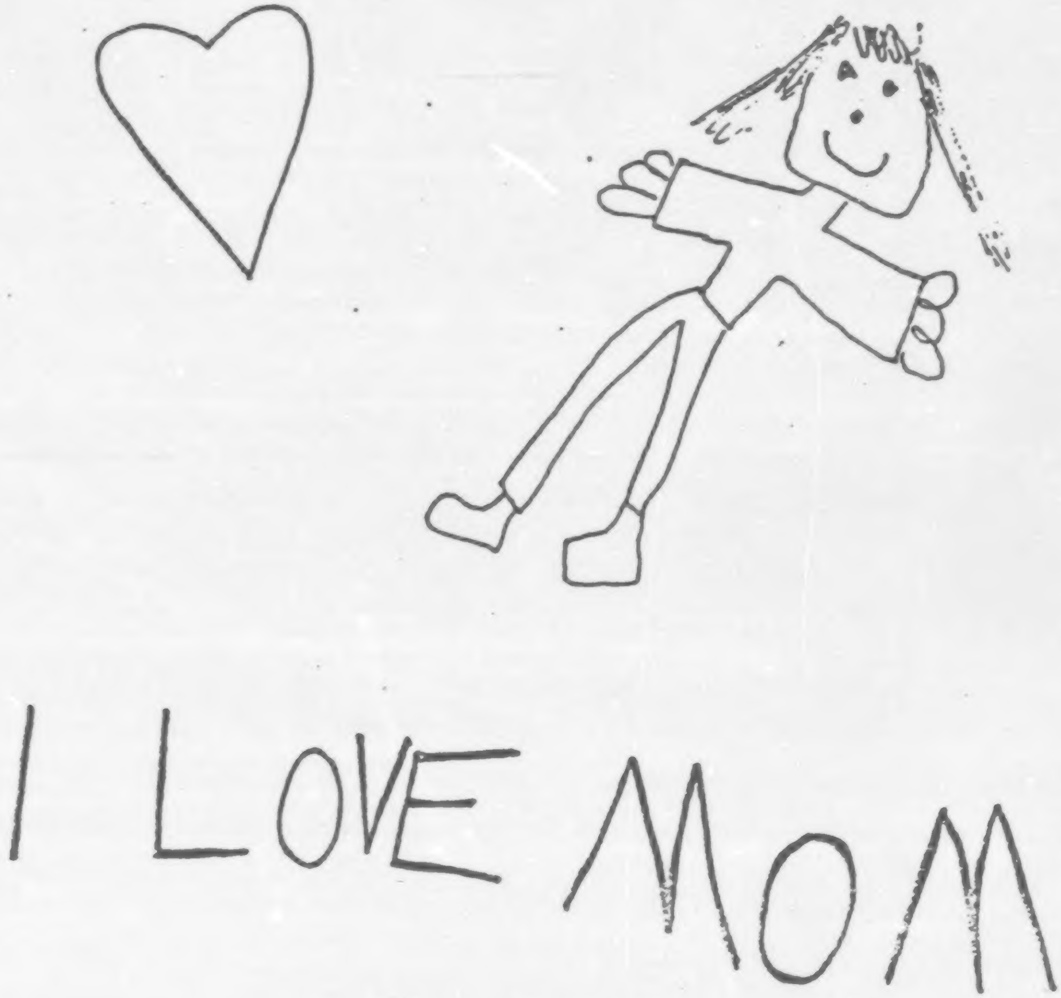
All of Tommy's writing came as a result of his desire to express himself. He always chose what he was going to write about. Therefore he had control of the content. He was able to determine what was important for him to work on and what should be abandoned.

When Tommy entered school he was five years, ten months old. When handed a blank nine-by-twelve inch journal with unlined pages, he opened it to the first page and carefully wrote,

Tommy
Hess

in the upper left hand corner. It is apparent that Tommy is familiar with handling books. He knows that writing is linear and horizontal, top to bottom and in a left to right direction. Most important, Tommy knows that writing serves a purpose. By writing his name, he claims possession of his book.

In the middle of the next page Tommy draws and writes.



Tommy is writing 'safe' words. And why not? For years he saw his sister's school papers lavishly adorned with smiling faces and stars, proudly displayed on the refrigerator. These papers were recognized by her teachers (I must admit I was her first grade teacher), parents and classmates because they were perfect. Tommy has come to school wanting smiling faces and stars. Instead of focusing on the correctness of his work, I focused on the content.

"Oh, you love your Mom!"

Tommy nods his head. After a long pause I ask, "Could you tell me more about that?"

"She's nice," he answers.

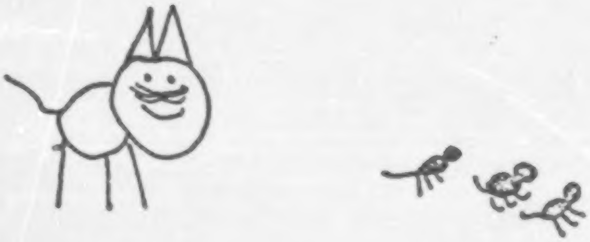
I repeat, "Oh, she's nice."

"Yeah, like this morning when she brought me to school. I don't like riding the bus and..."

Tommy's flowing dialogue about his Mom let's him know he does indeed know more about his topic. He also knows I am interested in hearing about it. No mention is made of Tommy's neat, perfectly spelled words. Instead, the message his words conveyed was the focus. At the end of the conference Tommy does not add any new information to his writing. Some may think the conference was not successful. I know to be patient...Tommy needs his oral language to help tell part of the story. The writing will come later.

For one week Tommy continues to write messages with safe words. On September 11 he writes,

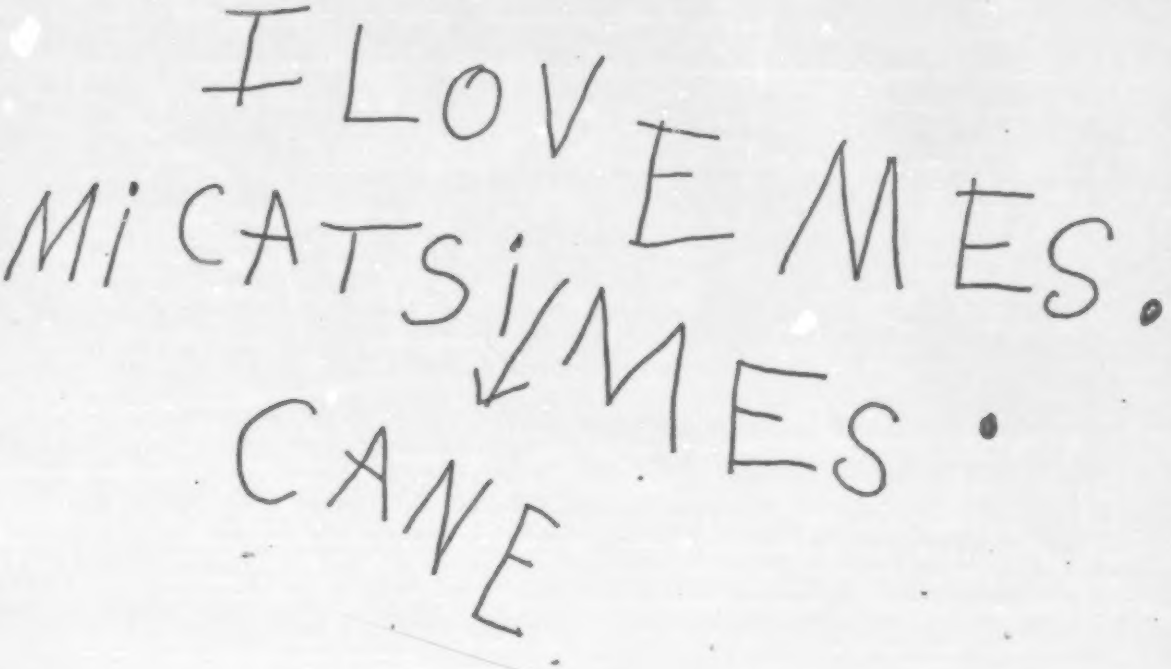
I LOVE MES.
CATSi MES.



He is using some safe words and some inventions. He is using periods. During a conference as Tommy reads his writing, he realizes something is missing. He's confused. It doesn't say what he wants it to say,

I LOVE MICE.
CAT IS MICE.

does not make sense. He reads is again and rewrites. His story now looks like:



I LOVE MES.
Mi CATSi MES.
CANE

His message reads:

I LOVE MICE.
MY CAT IS CHASING MICE.

After a content conference I asked Tommy, "How did you know to add these words?"

He replied, "Easy. When I read it, it wasn't right. I left words out."

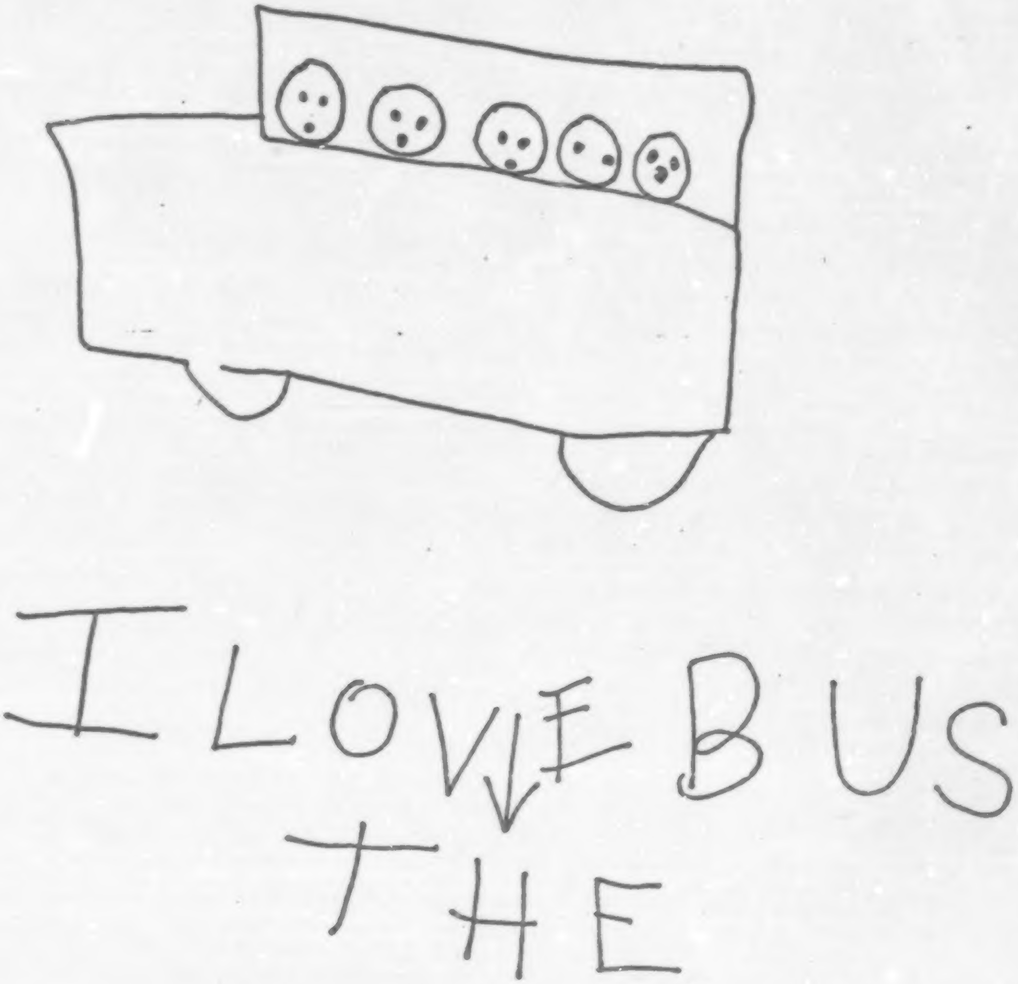
Having read his message Tommy realized that in order for his intended message to be understood by others, he needs to add more information. At this point he is adding at the word level. Consider the difference between,

CAT IS MICE.
MY CAT IS CHASING MICE.

He has added conflict which is an essential ingredient to stories. (Steinberg and Bruce, 1980).

In this episode, Tommy writes, reads (with a mediator present), and revises to make his text more meaningful. (When asked about the arrow, he explains that he saw me use one on the chalkboard when I was writing and he thought he'd try one!)

The next day Tommy writes,



I LOVE BUS
THE

After composing, Tommy reads his message to himself and revises on his own. He makes an arrow between the 'v' and 'E' in love and inserts the word 'THE'. When a writer makes changes in his text, it is because he has read the text and the intended meaning is not coming through to the audience. In this case the audience is the writer himself. Even when a writer talks to others about his writing and considers their comments, the writer must still reread his text in order to know in what ways the new information could effect his text. If he chooses to include the new information, where should it be added? If he is excluding information, what should be excluded?

When Tommy filled all the pages of his journal he began writing stories in pre-made booklets with six pages plus a cover and backing. [Since this is not a study of invented spelling, I will transcribe the texts in these stories for ease of reading. The revisions will be shown in my handwriting. I will double-space inbetween pages.]

On October 6, Tommy made his first attempt at writing a continuing story.

My Cat and Dog

My cat
My dog

My dog ~~is~~ was freezing.

My dog chases me.

My cat runs.

They fight.

The end

In this piece of writing, the language is rather telescopic leaving out the richness of the experience. Bissex explains,

> In early writings there is no clear distinction between writer and audience in the sense of someone who does not automatically share all the writer's unexpressed knowledge.

If Tommy knows it, then you too, must know it. More is happening with the cat, dog and Tommy than the writer has included in the text. He realizes something is missing but his concern lies in how the message sounds when he reads it to himself. Because he is still his own audience, he revises in order to make his sentences make sense to himself. Alone, he adds words on four pages. During a conference he rereads and crosses out one of his initial revisions. His steps in composing look like this:

```
writes--->reads------>revises------>rereads--------->revises
          (alone)     (alone)       (mediator        (mediator
                                     present)         present)
```

In Thought and Language Vygotsky speaks of mediated learning:

> What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening function.

During conferences the mediator (teacher) "marches ahead of development and leads it" by raising questions for the writer to consider during the composing process. Because of the predictable nature of the conferences, Tommy learns to anticipate the questions I will ask and begins to ask these questions of himself as he writes.

One month later Tommy's writing is more complete in that he is writing full sentences,but still telescopic in the way he tells only the main events of his experience.

November 1

## My Cast

I went to the hospital.
I went because I thought my arm was broken.

I did take x rays.

I went to McDonald's.

Now we are off to the bone doctor's.
He put on the cast.

The end

During a sharing time, the children act as the mediator with their many questions for Tommy.

Why did you go to the hospital?
Did you break your leg?
Did they put a jacket on you when you got x rays?
Why did you go to McDonald's?
Etc.

When Tommy rereads his story to himself, he does what most first graders do at the beginning of the year...he adds more information to the first event in the story. He is beginning to show an awareness for an audience other than himself...he is considering their questions and making an attempt to answer them in his text.

Tommy trembled as the tears rolled down his cheeks when he read his next story. I think he realized his audience will have many questions for him and he will need to talk about his topic in order to answer them.

December 1

I Want A Parakeet

One day I thought I should hurt my
cat to get a parakeet.

I didn't want to have a vote.
And we had a vote. I lost.

I could have two pets.
I had a cat and a dog.

I cried.

I hate parakeets. I had dreams.

The next night I had no dreams.

Know why I wanted to get a parakeet?
I was dumb.

Tommy was admitting that he wanted to hurt his cat and he had a difficult time explaining why. While Tommy listened to each question and answered and defended what he had written, he was also considering what to do with all the new information that needed to be included. He rereads his text with an audience in mind and tries to include what is needed. It is apparent in his last page when he directly addresses his audience, "Know why I wanted to get a parakeet?" that he intends for his text to have a reader other than himself. This author-to-reader communication is an "acknowledgement on the part of the author that the readers' views and concerns are relevant to the story." (Steinberg and Bruce, 1980)

As Tommy becomes more aware of his audience, it is important to him to try to write all he knows about his topic. Along with "does this make sense" Tommy is now concerned with "what shall I say next?" Sometimes he confuses his audience as in his next piece.

December 11

I Want A Cat

1 One day my mom said that I am getting a present.

2 My present was a cat. My cat is black and white.

3 My cat is nice.

6 My cat goes to the vet.

9 And one day my dog got hurt.

8 Sometimes my cat and my dog fight.

5 My cat is mean to the bird.

7 I love my cat.

4 I love my cat. My cat was chasing a bird. When the bird climbed up in a tree my cat was up on top of the tree. My cat fell off the tree.

The story is about a cat and a bird and his dog enters but the reader is not quite sure of all the ties. His peers tell him that it's all mixed up. They don't understand it. He continues to add on to the last page then realizes that it is still mixed up. He takes his booklet apart and reorders the pages. (The numbers on the left of each sentence indicate the new order). When finished he rereads it one last time and is satisfied the way it is.

After Christmas, Tommy wrote a twenty-two page story titled My Radio Car. It is apparent he has a lot to "say next." When he read it to the class, Arik commented that it wasn't all about his radiocar. There were some other things in it too. He decided to foucs on his topic about the radio car and to exclude several pages. He's still not ready to throw any pages away. Instead he puts the excluded pages together to make a new story about Christmas.

January 6

### My Radiocar

My radiocar is nice. My radiocar
has a remote control.

I got my radiocar on Christmas.

The radiocar is the best present.

I wanted a radiocar.

I have a blue radiocar.

My radiocar turns.

My radiocar goes reverse.

My radiocar is excellent.

I got some stickers to put on
the radiocar.

My dad put on the stickers.

This is the bottom of the radiocar.

My radiocar is fast.

My radiocar is fun.

My radiocar needs batteries.

The batteries run out because
I used the radiocar too much.

I love my radiocar.

The end

### My Christmas

I got fish.

I got a Mighty Mo. My Mighty Mo
is a baby toy. Not too much of
a baby toy.

I got a pinball machine.

I got a radiocar.
My radiocar is fun.

This was the best Christmas.

The end

In a discussion on structural devices in stories, Applebee (1980) mentions two types: centering where some central element is constant throughout the story. My Radiocar is an example of centering. Chaining is when one event implies or leads to the next event and so on. Tommy's next story is an example of chaining. As he completes each idea, Tommy is thinking, "and then what happened." This question leads him on to new text.

March 16

## I Went to the Village Store on My Bike

I am coming home from C.C.D.

I stopped at the store.

My mom said I could go to the Village Store
on my bike.

I am getting the pump to pump the tires.

I am eating.

I am washing my bike.

I am taking off. My sissy sister said,
"Go slow." I said, "No."

I fell off my bike because I went too fast.
I didn't get hurt.

Then I went slow.

I said, "Sissy Miss Hess, you go single file."

It was fun going single file.

I am going fast.

On the road was painted SCHOOL.

We are playing at the Rockwell School.
I am playing hopscotch.

We are going to the Village Store.

I got a big mouth. It cost 20¢.

We are going back to the Rockwell School and
I had fun. I had the most fun climbing over
the fence to get my mitten.

I am going home now. It took seven minutes
to get home.

I said, "Let's go fishing."
My sissy sister said, "Yes."

We are fishing. I did not catch any fish.

I am walking home.

The end

When Tommy started I Went to the Village Store on My Bike he announced that it would be his longest story ever. His main concern is "what happened next?" After writing each page, he rereads what he wrote considering what should come next. To Tommy, everything is of equal importance. When others listen to his story, there aren't many questions. Readers are satisfied with the amount of information and detail given.

In Tommy's next piece of writing he discovers that once again he has two stories.

April 15

~~The Children's Museum and~~
The Teachers Picketing About Proposition 2 1/2

I am going out to get in the car.
We are going to Boston because my mom is going
to picket about 2½. I do not want to go to watch.
I want to see other things. There are lots of things
to see you know.
How to picket. You have to take

a sign and hold it up. My mom came to picket.
I didn't want to watch it. So I just there. I said,
"I want to go to the Children's Museum."

~~My mom said, "Yes." I was happy.~~

~~My mom is there because~~ My mom is going to
picket because she doesn't want to lose her job.

I didn't want to watch it.

~~The teachers picketing was not over.~~
~~I was sad.~~ There was 50,000 people picketing.

As Tommy interacts with his text it is apparent he has many concerns. He wants to tell the reader why he is doing something, how he feels about it, what he actually does and why he does it. There is concern for his audience when he tells how to picket... another direct address, "You have to..." He freely adds new information, deletes what he feels is unnecessary and he focuses more on the picketing rather than the Children's Museum. (Probably because he never made it to the museum!)

## CONCLUSION:

Tommy has shown through these samples of writing how his concerns about his text have changed. At first, he is his own audience and answering his own questions. Through conferences he learns the questions others have of his text. He knows text must be meaningful. He revises first to make his text more meaningful to himself and then later for his audience. Through his revisions we have seen his concerns as a reader. He focuses on two questions. Does it make sense? What do I write next? As the year progresses he begins to consider sequencing, focusing, and is it true to life, but only after he has satisfied his first two questions. He freely adds new and deletes unnecessary information.

Tommy is a writer who reads his text and rewrites in order to make it more readable for others. He is a critical producer of reading.

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## Section VI

## Lesson From a Child: On the Teaching and Learning of Writing

## Section 6

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## Introduction

Teachers who let children write are often overwhelmed by what they see. So many different kinds of writing! So many different levels, different voices, different errors, choices, experiments and hopes. What does it all mean? What does this child need next? What about that one? What do the mistakes mean? What about the sound effects that accompany their writing? What's the teacher to do?

It's no wonder teachers are asking these questions, for as a profession, teachers have received remarkably little help in the teaching of writing. They do not know the territory of how children grow as writers; they have no context in which to place what they see. No one has demonstrated this more forcibly than Donald Graves did in his research report, Balance the Basics (1978). In this report on the status of writing in our country, Graves reveals statistics such as these:

-a random survey of 36 universities which prepare teachers showed 169 courses were offered in the teaching of reading; only two focused on the teaching of writing.

-in the National Institute 1976 Yearbook on the Status of Education and Development in the United States, $15.7 million was set aside for the development of basic skills. Writing was not even included as a basic skill.

-state certification requirements do not require

English teachers to take even a single course in the teaching of writing.

It's no surprise teachers are calling out for help in the teaching of writing. Most have had no training in writing, and many, like a growing percentage of adults in our society, rarely write themselves. Some people claim writing has become an endangered species in our society. Instead of communicating, people are "staying in touch." As Margaret Early reports (1979), although the amount of first-class mail has doubled in the past ten years, 80 percent of it is business mail, 10 percent of it is greeting cards, and only 3 percent is person-to-person writing. Instead of writing, people are phoning.

Although some of our reasons to write may be diminished by the telephone, the real reason to write is not to communicate, but to learn. "Writing," Janet Emig (1977) persuasively argues, "represents a unique mode of learning--not merely valuable, not merely special, but unique." When we write, we sift and categorize, we build connections, we move at our own pace--now pushing ahead, now turning backwards.

Because it is such a powerful tool for learning, writing is more necessary now than ever, for as Toffler wisely comments, "The illiterate of tomorrow will not be the person who cannot read. It will be the person who cannot learn."

Pressure is on to teach writing. Many researchers advocate teaching writing as a mode of learning. Parents, meanwhile, are up in arms about Johnny who cannot write. Competency tests have added fuel to the fire. Yet for teachers, the prospect of relating to those 24 or 35 children as writers is a fearful one, and the notion of teaching writing as a mode of thinking is even more frightening. What's a teach to do?

Teachers have long ago learned that research offers little help, for controlled variables and factor analyses do not speak to the real drama of classroom life. As Mishler (1979) points out, the context-stripping procedures of experimental research are more suited to studies of corn or alfalfa than of people. In his significant article, "Meaning in Context; Is There Any Other Kind?" Mischler suggests that for educational researchers to have an effect in education, our task must not be to strip away the classroom context, but rather "to specify the conditions under which the relationship of the form Y=f(X) holds" (p. 8).

What's a teacher to do? Regretfully--but understandably--teachers are doing in writing what they've done in reading. Despite everything we know about how children learn naturally, despite their undeniable success in learning to walk and to talk, we tell our eager young learners that their natural way of learning is not the best method. They mustn't any longer learn through interaction, within the matrix of their own purposes. Instead we tell children they must learn one discrete piece at a time, from simple to complex. Their learning must be based on the model of industrial production rather than of organic growth. We tell our youngsters they're not ready to write stories, recipes, letters and Valentine poems; instead they must begin with "the basics."

Moffett (1967) describes the way our schools construe the basics. He writes:

> Basics are components, particles--words, sentences, and paragraphs. The learner should manipulate each of these units separately in a situation controlled for one problem at a time. He works his way from little particles to big particles until he arrives at the whole composition. (p. 13)

Then when children finally reach the level of writing whole compositions, we again tell them, "Wait, you're not ready yet. Let me show you the basics." But now the basics are sentence combining, topic sentences, kinds of paragraphs, and finally, five paragraph themes.

This familiar and heart-wrenching story reminds me of a poem written by an unknown author.

### The Little Boy

Once a little boy went to school.
He was quite a little boy
And it was quite a big school....

One morning
When the little boy had been in school a while
The teacher said,
"Today we are going to make a picture."

"Good," thought the little boy.
He liked to make pictures.
He could make all kinds:
Lions and tigers
Chicken and cows
Trains and boats.
And he took out his box of crayons
And began to draw.

But the teacher said, "Wait,
It's not time to begin."
And she waited until everyone looked ready.

"Now," said the teacher,
"We are going to make flowers."
"Good!" thought the little boy.
He liked to make flowers,
And he began to make beautiful ones
With his pink and orange and blue crayons.

But the teacher said, "Wait,
And I will show you how."
And she drew a flower on the blackboard.
It was red, with a green stem.
"There," said the teacher,
"Now you may begin."

The little boy looked at the teacher's flower,
Then he looked at his own flower.
He liked his flower better than the teacher's
But he did not say this.
He just turned his paper over
And made a flower like the teacher's.
It was red, with a green stem.

On anotner day
When the little boy had opened
The door from the outside all by himself,
The teacher said,
"Today we are going to make something with clay."
"Good!" thought the little boy.
He liked clay.
He could make all kinds of things with clay:
Snakes and snowmen,
Elephants and mice,
Cars and trucks--
And he began to pull and pinch
His ball of clay.

But the teacher said,
"Wait. It is not time to begin."
And she waited until everyone looked ready.

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"Now," said the teacher,
"We are going to make a dish."
"Good!" thought the little boy.
He liked to make dishes.
And he began to make some
That were all shapes and sizes.

But the teacher said, "Wait,
And I will show you how."
And she showed everyone how to make
One deep dish.
"There," said the teacher,
"Now you may begin."

The little boy looked at the teacher's dish.
Then he looked at his own.
He liked his dishes better than the teacher's.
But he did not say this.
He just rolled his clay into a big ball again,
And made a dish like the teacher's.
It was a deep dish.

And pretty soon
The little boy learned to wait.
And to watch,
And to make things just like the teacher.

And pretty soon
He didn't make things of his own any more.

Then it happened
That the little boy and his family
Moved to another city,
And the little boy
Had to go to another school.

This school was even bigger
Than the other one,
And there was no door from the outside
Into his room.
He had to go up more big steps,
And walk down a long hall
To get to his room.
And the very first day
He was there
The teacher said,
"Today we are going to make a picture."

"Good!" thought the little boy,
And he waited for the teacher
To tell him what to do
But the teacher didn't say anything.
She just walked around the room.

When she came to the little boy
She said, "Don't you want to make a picture?"
"Yes," said the little boy.
"What are we going to make?"
"I don't know until you make it," said the teacher.
"How shall I make it?" asked the little boy.
"Why any way you like," said the teacher.
"And any color?" asked the little boy.
"Any color," said the teacher.
"If everyone makes the same picture,
And used the same colors,
How would I know who made what,
and which was which?"
"I don't know," said the little boy.
And he began to draw a flower.
It was red, with a green stem.

Author Unknown

I expect that poem resonates in us all. We've each drawn that red flower with a green steam. And we've each been the teacher, saying "Wait, I'll show you how."

We hold onto our teaching of writing when we do not understand the learning of writing. We hold onto our writing textbooks when we do not know how to read our children's own texts. We hold onto our pre-determined sequence when we cannot anticipate the possible pathways which children's writing development might take. We keep control firmly in our hands because we do not know what might happen if young writers held control of their craft in their own hands. What would our new role be if children didn't need us in the old ways? How would we guide their efforts if we let children write? What would children show us--if we let them?

These questions provide the context for my research. Lessons from a Child is the story of how one youngster changed as a writer during her third and fourth grade years. My hope is that through closely observing one child's growth in writing we'll learn to watch for, and to respect, each child's growth in writing. My hope is that by understanding the pathways one child has taken in learning to write we may be able to discern and trust the pathways other children will take.

This is the first study of its kind. A great many researchers have examined written products, dividing them into categories and levels. But rarely in the research findings do we catch a glimpse of a youngster, bending over her paper, surrounded by the sounds of pencils being sharpened, of stories being shared. And nowhere in the research do we find a record of day-to-day changes in a youngster's writing process. Nowhere do we watch as a child graduates from a thick red pencil to a thin yellow one, from writing one draft to shuttling between many. Why haven't more researchers thought to pull their chairs alongside youngsters' desks and watch what the youngsters do during writing? The method seems so obvious, so logical. It's hard to imagine why no one thought of it before.

Yet I, too, did not see the obvious. It was Dr. Donald Graves who had the vision to conceive of this study, to see the obvious. I was a classroom teacher at this time, just beginning to publish articles in Language Arts and Learning. Like so many teachers, I observed my students and kept field notes, but the specialized vocabulary and statistical framework associated with research had built a mystique around it and it never would have occurred to me that my records were data, that I was a researcher.

In fact, I was suspicious of research. It seemed so alien to classrooms and children. My first thought when Graves asked me to come to the University of New Hampshire as a full-time researcher was, "Why should I leave the children for reams of charts and numbers?" My second thought was, "Why is he asking me, a teacher?"

But I soon found Graves had a different idea of research. Both Graves and his funding source, The National Institute of Education, wanted a research project which bridged theory and practice, a project which would show teachers and children in the context of their classrooms. And Graves wanted the findings to reach teachers as well as other researchers. Listening to his plans for a study grounded in the classroom, I realized this was the opportunity we long for as teachers. It was the chance to stay at a child's side and see the learning which happens through and despite teaching.

And so we began the research project, "How Children Change as Writers." The research team grew, with research associate Susan Sowers and secretary/general manager, Lois Cyr, joining the team. This group did not assemble en masse alongside Susie's desk, for the case study of Susie was part of a larger study involving 16 children, grades 1-4. Each of us became a live-in researcher in a separate classroom site, following separate children. Although I observed the writing development of eight children, this book focuses on the lessons from one child and from her teachers. I focus on Susie because I learned the most from her.

# Chapter 1

## A Case Study of a Child and a Researcher

Shafts of May sunlight rippled through the classroom, breathing an openness into the small, old-fashioned room. For me, the approach of summer carried with it a bitter-sweet sadness, for it meant the close of the research project. Now, as I scanned the familiar classroom, my eyes lingered on each youngster's face. In every nook and cranny of the room, young writers were at work. Some worked together, conferring with each other as they wrote. Others worked alone.

I smiled at the sight of tow-headed Birger, for despite the summer warmth, his ever present Norwegian sweater hung on the back of his chair. Birger's writing was draped over three desks--a patchwork of paragraphs and sentences welded together with scotch tape and staples. He watched for my eyes to meet his, then launched into an explanation. "I kept on reading my paper down," he said, "and then I'd think if I needed to put more in, or change things, or add excitement." He pointed to a flap hanging from his scroll-like paper. "See, this is draft eight. I stapled it right on top." From the far end of the classroom, Birger's teacher

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reminded her class it was time to put away the writing and to come to a class meeting.

Soon a circle of 24 fourth graders sat waiting to help each other with their work in progress. It was at that moment that the classroom door opened and the visitor slipped into the room. I'd been expecting him all morning --he was one of a stream of visitors from this country and abroad who wanted to see if the research reports were true. Could children really do so much as writers?

The teacher called on Susie to share her writing, and I was glad for the soft-spoken, earnest youngster had been the focus of my research for two years. Susie blushed and hesitated, but her eyes smiled merrily. It was a combination of forces--of restraint and eagerness, of shyness and laughter--that had been part of Susie and of her writing ever since I'd met her.

Susie glanced at her paper, then looked up. "I read over my first draft and then I thought, 'How did it feel?' 'What was it like?' I realized probably my whole draft was like that--blah." Susie then explained she'd written another draft, adding details. Her teacher suggested she read the beginnings of each and so, still blushing, the pixie-like youngster began with draft 1, then moved to draft 2.

| Draft 1 | Draft 2 |
|---|---|
| I was at a beach in Florida. I pressed my | I pressed my toes in the hot sand. I wiggled them |

toes into the hot sand.
I saw my sister jumping
out in the waves with
my Aunt. She was jumping
around as the waves
hit her, she was out
deep...I wanted to go
and play in the big
waves but I was nervous
to.

around. The gritty sand
felt good on my sunburnt
toes. I looked out over
the ocean. My sister was
out deep, jumping over
waves with my Aunt. Sometimes
the waves got too
big and they would knock
her over, then my Aunt
would pull her up and
she'd be dripping wet and
they'd start laughing.
My shoulders were hot
from the burning sun. I
would have loved to be out
there in the waves but I
was too scared.

The visitor's pleased eyes met mine. He whispered, "I got here just in time."

I thought of the changes in Susie's classrooms and in her writing since I'd entered her world two years earlier. Our visitor hadn't seen Susie's teachers struggle against their fear of writing; he hadn't watched them grow into their strengths. He hadn't seen the changes in Susie either. Two years ago she had been quite an ordinary writer in an ordinary classroom. In two years she had grown into the writer's craft. Now she was a relentless reviser, and she wrote for herself as well as for others. Our visitor had seen the final product, but he'd missed out on the growing. "I guess we see it differently," I said to him. "I'd say you got here just too late."

This is the story of what I learned because I wasn't too late. Through a grant from the National Institute of Education, I documented the day-to-day changes in Susie's writing and in her classrooms during her third and fourth grade years. With clipboard in hand, I participated in and followed Susie's growth as a writer.

She grew as humans do--all in one piece, with spurts and plateaus, in tears and laughter, and above all, through interactions with friends, teachers, researchers, texts, family, and with herself. And so this story of Susie's growth as a writer encompasses the full drama of classroom life.

Some may ask, "What can the story of one child say about writing development in general?" Until more research is done, we cannot know. We can only hypothesize ways Susie's writing may be characteristic of middle childhood and ways it is unique. More than anything I hope this study highlights the need to watch other young writers at work in their classrooms. Susie is probably most representative of "all children" in that she, too, is unique.

For as teachers we have always known that every child's writing development involves a special combination of that youngster's personal style, cognitive development, and writing instruction. Although writing development is talked about "in general," it always happens "in particular." In the end, we always teach unique children and all our students are case-studies.

Or is the reverse true? Is it the children who teach, and we who learn? The irony of this research is that when we regard our students as unique and fascinating, when they become case-study subjects even while they are students, then the children become our teachers, showing us how they learn. I have named this Lessons from a Child because after my seventh draft I discovered that it is not the story of a child learning to write. It is the story of a researcher learning to teach.

## Chapter 2

## First Impressions--and Beyond

I left Mrs. Howard's classroom early on my first day as a researcher. Outside, the crispness of that September day only sharpened my disappointment. Partly it had been the crowded classroom, the silent rows of children, their desks piled high with textbooks, workbooks and ditto sheets. The classroom had seemed more like a junior high than a third grade room. Driving back to the university, I realized it was more than that. I'd wanted to take over as teacher, to bring parakeets and plants into the room, to push the desks into clusters and to hang bright fabrics over the pale green walls. A new school year had begun and I wasn't sure I liked having a clipboard instead of a classroom.

The writing had been a disappointment. Susie was one of the better writers, which seemed to mean only that her pieces were longer and more fluent than the others. Like the rest, they were voiceless. Watching her, I had the impression she was writing with words rather than with images, ideas and memories. She toiled to make her margins straight and her letters even but she did not toil over her content, pausing to chew her pencil or to wrestle with a word choice. She seemed to care more about form than content, about her little square letters and story conventions than her subject.

Her story began with a conventional beginning; I wondered if she'd deliberately tried to answer the who, what, where, when, why questions:

> Once there was a clockmaker named Sam. Sam owned a shop on Klicket Street. He lived there with his wife and cat. He made clocks of all kinds.[1]

Susie used storybook words such as "content" rather than "happy." Her tale followed two separate themes--their only apparent connection was that both were borrowed from storybooks. The story ends with the dog and cat living happily ever after--an ending which appears to have been chosen not because it fits the story but because it fits story conventions.

> Sam and his wife were very content. Even the cat looked pleased. He got up at 8:00 and washed up and ate at 8:30. He started making clocks at 9:00. He usually went to bed at 10:00. On weekends he worked in the garden. But when he was a little boy he always wanted a dog...It took a while for the dog and cat to get along.

Susie's cautious, conventional tale was not unusual for her classroom.

I was spending time in the first grade as well as in Mrs. Howard's room and I liked it better there. The room emanated a sense of confidence. Although the first graders' letters wobbled up and down the page, their voices boomed. Many of the children knew only a handful of consonants, yet even the titles of their handmade books reflected confidence: "All About Worms," "My Recipe Book," "How to Make a Robot," "All About Space and Boats." With child-like egocentricity, these children believed they were experts on a whole world of things. Whereas older students worried how to make their stories good enough, neat enough, exciting enough...6 year-olds wrote with confidence and with personal investment. Each story bore the imprint of the author's personality. Jen's tale is an example; it was named after Woody Owl, a rubber bird she carried about tucked into the waistband of her corduroy trousers.

### Me and Woody

by Jen

> I like summer. It is fun. With Woody, it is fun. But oh, it is good. Woody catched me and I said, 'Let's ride on my bike,' honk, honk. Then we played the same thing again.

How different Jen's story is from Susie's rather wooden, cautious tale. In fact, the two youngsters seemed to have engaged in different tasks altogether. In large, splashy letters, Jen has left her mark. Her writing reflects her style, her life force. As Graves reports, "Jen was saying, 'I am.'"

Psychologist Howard Gardner says that in art, as in writing, the products of a 5 to 7 year-old tend to show a flexibility and a flavorfulness which is often missing in work done by older children. He writes (1980):

> The young child of 5-7...shows the spontaneity, the natural sense of form and balance of the accomplished artist and lacks the inhibitions about product, the self-consciousness about technique that will impair the work of his older peers. (p. 175)

Gardner suggests that products made by older children often feature a precision and a command of convention which are not found in the work of younger children, yet, he says, one can't help but feel that something vital which was present at the age of 6 has disappeared.

Perhaps the missing element is confidence and personal investment. In neither the content nor the voice of Susie's early third grade writing was she saying, "I am." Her writing was more an example of her spelling and penmanship than her mark on the world. Instead of putting herself onto paper, Susie had chosen safer challenges.

Many of her classmates, too, seemed to cautiously avoid investing themselves in their writing. Susie was not alone in her focus on correctness and convention. As I looked around the third grade, it seemed there were many examples of writing development reaching this level and then grinding to a halt. Somewhere between first and third grade, children had learned to plunk reasonably correct words in a reasonably correct story frame and to ask only, "Is this okay?" They had learned to take few risks and they find few rewards. For these children, it seemed the challenge and the playfulness had gone from composition. The safe route was easier; but it didn't tap children's energy, and it didn't lead to new discoveries. Melodies do not emerge from finger drills unless the pianist shifts into a listening mode.

I began to call this "the third grade plateau," for it seemed that having learned to write politely and with detachment, many children were no longer learning to write well. I remember thinking back then that in our society many of us never get beyond this plateau. After this, stories tend to get longer, more correct, more conventional. People graduate from "Once Upon a Time" to five paragraph themes. But around about third grade writing development, for many people, slows to a halt.

This shouldn't be a surprise, for if ownership and personal investment and the courage to take risks leave--there isn't the force left for learning. We write to say "I am," "This is me," "Here is my mark," "This I have made." If personal investment and voice leave, there isn't the force left for writing.

From my research pedestal, I was quick to decide that classroom environments were at the root of Jen and her classmates' confidence and willingness to experiment in print,

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and of Susie and her classmates' fear of being wrong. Certainly the classrooms were as different as the children in them. In the first grade room, children wrote independently, choosing their topic, their paper, even their spellings. Mrs. Giacobbe listened to the children's stories and helped them extend their content. Only after this did she attend to spellings, and again, she first noticed what children *had* done, then helped them take their work one step farther. She believed children could learn to write just as they learn to walk. When a toddler says "Da" instead of Father, we do not worry the child will fixate on bad habits. We are not afraid to let children talk as best they can. We view their errors as closer and closer approximations, and delight in whatever the baby *can* do. Mrs. Giacobbe similarly responded to her children's early writing.

Mrs. Howard's classroom was quite the opposite. Before each writing episode, Mrs. Howard reminded her students to watch out for spelling mistakes and to be neat. Clearly, I decided, it was not from her genes but from her environment that Susie had learned to value transcription over composition, and to regard "basic skills" as spelling, penmanship and punctuation. I felt certain that Mrs. Howard's teaching methods were the reason for Susie and her classmates' preoccupations with convention, correctness and being "good enough."

My intent had been to study development, but by late

September I realized I could not overlook the importance of instruction...or more specifically, of Mrs. Howard. Much of my attention during the early phases of the study turned to the teaching of writing--for I found I could not document growth in writing unless the classroom environment allowed that growth to take place. In the early sections of this book, as in the early sections of our study, my focus will be on the classroom environment, as well as on Susie's work within it.

For those first weeks of school, I'd politely, cautiously circled around the 36 year-old teacher, hoping, I suppose, that I could be invisible. She was a veteran teacher and her curriculum had been built up through many years of teaching third grade. I figured she was satisfied with everything about her teaching. With her bright Hawaiian shirts and frosted curls, Mrs. Howard had a sophistication, an air of being "one of the girls." She spent most of her free moments in the teachers' room, talking with the other teachers about their husbands, their exercise class, their children. I didn't know quite what to say to her. In the beginning, I avoided looking at her so she wouldn't look at me. But by mid-September, I sensed that ignoring her was no longer an option, for unless the classroom environment changed, I worried the third grade plateau might better be called the third grade dead-end. Should I get involved in instruction? Would that help? What was my role to be in this classroom?

Every participant obeserver asks these questions and answers them, too, consciously or unconsciously. I wanted my answers to be conscious.

I felt torn. Not by a fear of "contaminating the data," for it was already clear that my task would be to document the contamination rather than to neutralize it. But I knew I should maintain a low profile with the children. I wanted them to view me as a quiet observer rather than as part of the teaching force. And anyhow, I was finding, to my surprise, that observing the children took all my time and energy. What was I to do?

The dilemma of the classroom was often on my mind. For the lack of a solution, I began secretly to watch Mrs. Howard. She wouldn't have wanted me to observe her, I could tell by the way she lowered her voice when I was near. And so I usually sat beside a child, with only my ears riveted onto Mrs. Howard.

I don't think she knew quite what to say to the children about their writing. She'd never been trained to teach writing and it frightened her. Sometimes she'd lavishly compliment a child, others times she'd hunt out every error. But mostly she avoided interactions and concentrated on the class as a whole. She'd pass out assignments, give children half-sheets of paper (to save trees) and remind them not to make mistakes and to write with pencils, not mouths. Then after the appropriate interval (usually about 15 minutes), she'd tell the class to finish, for it was time to move on to the next subject. Mostly, her attention was on the two ends of composing--assigning topics and correcting mistakes.

To me, it was an alien way to teach writing, so regimented, so bound into little boxes of time. Yet as I watched Mrs. Howard, an image flashed into mind of the time my sixth graders pressured me to teach them dance. My stomach knots at the thought of dancing, and I feel all hands and feet. I remember those dance classes with my sixth graders. I kept looking over my shoulder in fear someone would walk in and see the kids racing about, and worse, see me looking like a fool. I doubt I thought about dance at all during those classes. Because I didn't know what else to do, and because I felt out of control, I yelled out commands like an army sergeant. I insisted on straight lines, on silence, on obedience. Remembering those dance classes helped me see beneath Mrs. Howard's regimentation and bold Hawaiian prints, and to see myself in her.

The moment of empathy became a seed for change. It occurred to me I would never have allowed a researcher to document my floundering attempts to teach dance. Yet Mrs. Howard had done the equivalent. What courage it must have taken her to invite me, a university researcher, to observe her in the curriculum area of her greatest fear!

I realized she must wonder what I was seeing. Worse, she must sense it: a shake of the head, an early exit from her classroom, silence. What messages had I been sending?

None of this was quite conscious. It was a flux of images and feelings. And so I didn't decide to change my stance...but somehow I began to look through different eyes, focusing on what the children could do, on who they were as individuals rather than on whether they met my expectations.

Funny things happened. Take the clockmaker story. It can be an example of voiceless, conventional writing, but when I looked more closely and with trust, I saw it as more.

For example, it seems significant that when the curtain opens at the start of third grade, Susie was writing about a man, his wife, cat and dog. Alongside of Susie, Wendy retold a thrilling movie, Greg filled his page with car crashes, Diane sat before an empty page saying, "I can't think of anything exciting enough." And Susie happily spun her tale about a little man who made clocks, worked in his garden, and felt content. That said something about Susie, and I began to see her as an individual.

I wondered, too, if it could be significant that Susie's first story was about a clockmaker. The clockmaker's subject--the passage of time--proved to also be Susie's subject. In this story and in later stories, Susie weaves her characters into a linear sequence of time. Whereas many children structure their pieces around the visual, Susie's structure tended to be temporal. Thus we read about the sequence of the clockmaker's day but we do not see his shop or the setting of his home. For both Susie and for the clockmaker, time becomes the subject of their craft; whereas the clockmaker builds his time markers with hammer and tin, Susie builds hers with narrative and print.

It was not only Susie but also the third grade plateau which I began to see with new eyes. I'd been so quick to name Mrs. Howard as culprit, yet the third grade conventionalness extends beyond any one classroom. On the playground, 8-10 year-old children are known for their rigid adherence to rules. It is the age of "the right way to play." In their oral language, children of this age group stay close to the literal meaning of words. A third grade teacher recently asked her children to clap the dirty chalkboard erasers against each other. The youngsters went outside and returned to the classroom a few minutes later, covered with rectangular prints of chalk dust. In their art work, stock characters and themes replace the exploratory flavor once found in children's art work. A colleague and I recently stood before a bulletin board of third grade pictures. Each drawing seemed like the next one. My friend whispered, with a touch of sarcasm, "Circle the one that's different."

Howard Gardner (1980) summarizes the middle childhood years by saying, "Now, for the first time, a child in the midst of singing or dancing will stop and nervously ask, 'Is this right?'"(p. 150).

And so, by late September, I'd realized it was too easy to name Mrs. Howard as the culprit. I began to suspect that Susie's attention to convention and correctness probably related to development as well as to environment. By third grade, children have a growing ability to anticipate a future time, a later space. They can plan ahead in their future pieces and they can anticipate an audience's response. They can also look back at their texts and view them through someone else's eyes.

Growing up means new powers, but it also means new fears. As young children develop their ability to look back and judge their writing, they can become more deliberate, but also more self-conscious. As young children develop their ability to view their work through the eyes of another, they become more conscious of the needs of their audience, but also more aware of peer pressure, more afraid of being different. As young children develop more ability to plan, they also develop more ability to worry.

Middle childhood is a vulnerable time for most children. Susie seemed to have retreated to the safety of conventional, correct pieces. Yet I was sensing this could be a time of potential as well as of risks. The same forces which make this a vulnerable time, also make it a powerful time. I was looking forward to Susie's growth, confident something would happen.

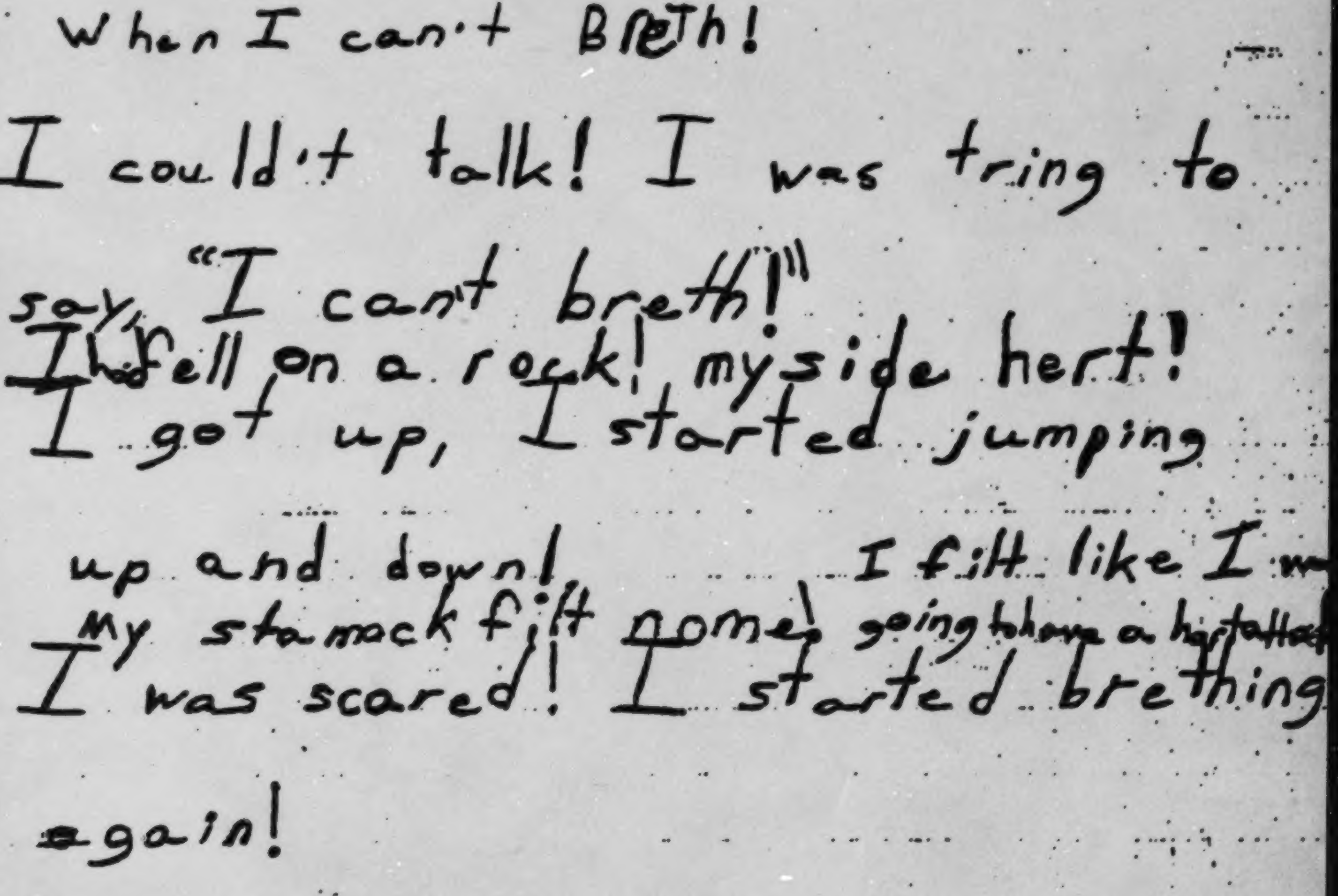
## Chapter 3:

## When Teachers and Researchers Focus on Children, the Curriculum Changes

My research didn't feel like spying anymore, and I wasn't so afraid of looking Mrs. Howard in the eyes. Rather than circling around her, I began coming to school early to tag along as she ran off dittos and prepared the classroom. We talked about her exercise class and my struggles to write, but mostly we talked about the children. It was such a luxury to have someone else who was interested in their every move. In the staff room, we'd pull our chairs together and puzzle over their stories, delighting in them and looking altogether like an elderly couple with pictures of the grandchildren.

At first the other teachers in the staff room would eye us from across the table. They'd listen for a moment to our animated discussions of the children, then shake their heads. I don't think they were used to this new Mrs. Howard. For many years, she'd led conversations about teflon parties, school administrators, and local events. Now, with equal enthusiasm, she leafed through children's writing, saying "Did you see Jeremy write this piece?" or "What were Mark and Rebecca talking about today?"

In the classroom, we helped each other observe and enjoy the children. When Birger brought this paper to his teacher, instead of correcting his exclamation marks, she counted them--then sent the puzzled youngster to share his paper with me. Mistakes weren't something to be feared, not in the way they once had been.



When I can't BRETh!

I could't talk! I was tring to
say, "I cant breth!"
I had fell on a rock! myside hert!
I got up, I started jumping
up and down! I fitt like I w
My stamack fitt nome going to have a hartattac
I was scared! I started brething
again!

When Aaron went days without eeking a single word onto his paper, Mrs. Howard and I shared our concern for him. Often as we worked across the room from each other, our eyes would meet and we'd both look over to Aaron. Once day while we watched him, Aaron picked up his pencil and wrote. Mrs. Howard's eyes signalled me to read what he had written:

I doent lik to rit

We didn't say anything to each other or to Aaron, but we were both concerned. Later that morning, when Aaron added a single word onto his sentence, Mrs. Howard and I celebrated:

I doent lik to rit today.

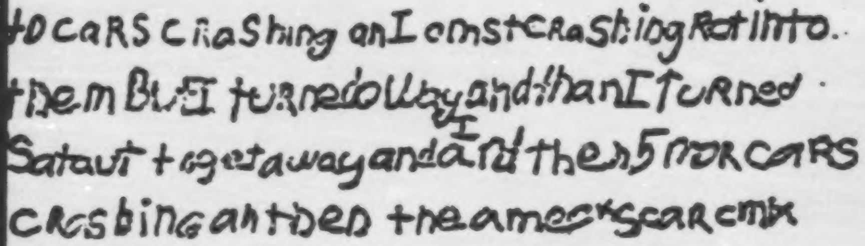
We watched Susie, too, and noticed how Diane, Wendy and Kerry all vied with each other for her favor. What was the magnetic pull that this small, pixie-like girl held over the others? If anything, Susie was quieter than the others, and less interested in the vogue topics of new clothes, new hair styles, and who gets to play with whom during recess. Early in the year, Mrs. Howard and I wondered why Susie held such power over that cluster of girls...later, we wondered why she held such power over me!

We learned to read children's writing in a new way, seeing the printed words as the tip of an iceberg and speculating what might lie under the surface. Sometimes I'd dismiss a piece of writing and then Mrs. Howard would see things in it, often it was the other way around. Sometimes the piece stumped us both. We looked for a long time, for example, at Greg's first piece of writing before we could learn from it.

IwasDivnInthe SeRwoLanoLasan

Translation

I was driving the steering wheel and all of a sudden two cars crashed. I almost



40caRScRaShinganIamstcRaShingRotinto.
themBuTIturnedowayandthanITuRned
I
Satouttogetawayandandthen5morcaRS
cRasbingantDentheamercKscarcm

crashed right into them
but I turned away and
then I turned straight
to get away and then
five more cars crashed
and then the emergency
car came....

Only when we trusted that Greg's mistakes as well as his successes were indications of what he knew did we find clues to the thinking between the lines. We wondered if the rise and fall of Greg's printing reflected the lilt of his oral language. Were capitals used for emphasis? How had he dared to attempt such words as emergency (amercks)? When questions such as these guided our observations of Greg, instead of being the cause of despair, Greg became the cause of concern and soon, of hope.

We rarely talked directly about curriculum or about the teaching of writing. I shied away from those topics--not because I had no suggestions to make, but because I knew that as a live-in guest in room 209, I needed to be Mrs. Howard's friend and colleague rather than her supervisor. Occasionally I did make suggestions, "for research purposes," knowing full well my intent was to influence her teaching. But mostly, it was enough to talk about children and the learning of writing, for our intense focus on the children was leading implicitly to changes in the classroom environment and in the teaching of writing. Neither Mrs. Howard nor

I consciously directed those changes; we certainly had no thought, at the time, that room 209 would become a model writing classroom and that our joint efforts would lead not only to data on how children learn to write, but also to data on how teachers can facillitate that learning.

Since the study, many people have questioned my role in Mrs. Howard's classroom. "Do you mean Mrs. Howard changed magically without guidance from you?" I do not know how to answer their questions. Clearly it was not by accident that the classroom became more like the British primary schools in which I'd done my training. Yet the approach which was developed towards teaching writing was not my invention--nor did it belong to Don Graves or Susan Sowers. And yes, it did seem magical. Changes in the curriculum, like the movement on a Ouiji board, seemed to arise magically out of a shared focus on how children learn to write.

If only there'd been another set of researchers at Atkinson documenting the interactions between our research team and the teachers, for clearly each party left a powerful impact on the other. If only there'd been another researcher in room 209, documenting the changes in both Mrs. Howard and me. For my attention was soon so focused on the children that Mrs. Howard's growth became the backdrop, affecting my data as lighting affects the painter's subject. In retrospect, I often replay those first few months in the classroom, asking, "How did the changes in the classroom and in Mrs. Howard happen?" and "Which were the turnkey changes, which led to others?"

I think that especially because I was in room 209 not as a co-teacher but as a researcher, my presence highlighted the importance of Mrs. Howard's role. My respectful interest in every little thing Mrs. Howard's children did validated the importance of her profession. Mrs. Howard and only Mrs. Howard could create the environment in which children would grow as writers. This is the awesome responsibility every teacher knows, a responsibility which often goes unrecognized by the outside world and eventually by the teachers themselves. By highlighting the importance of Mrs. Howard's teaching, the research project helped her regain the sense of personal mission which had led her into the teaching profession nine years before. This sense of personal mission had worn away over the years, but now the NIE study had rekindled the belief that Mrs. Howard had a unique contribution she could make to her students.

When our study was completed, Dr. Bob Walshe of Australia asked Graves, "What is the essential message of your study?"

Graves replied, "When people own a place, they look after it. When it belongs to someone else, they couldn't care less." Graves was referring to children and their ownership of a piece of writing, but his words apply also to teachers and their ownership of their teaching. When

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Mrs. Howard began to feel responsibility and ownership for her classroom, she began to look after it, to invest herself in it. During school time and after school, she began to think of ways she could help children grow as writers. Looking back, she made three important changes during the first months.

## Topic Choice...and Ownership

During the first weeks of school, the children wrote on assigned topics. After a while this began to trouble me, for I often watched Susie come into the classroom in the morning bursting with stories about washing her dog, shopping with her mother, feeding worms to a bird. She'd begin telling the stories to Diane before attendance was taken, and often she'd finish them in hidden bits of paper, passed secretly from writer to reader.

But when writing time came, with its assignments about summer vacations and trips, Susie's urge to tell would be gone. Watching Susie, I was reminded of a childhood trip to the zoo. I remembered climbing off the school bus with my classmates, wide-eyed at the sight of giraffes and elephants, and having my teacher call out, "Don't forget, we're looking at feet." That day I watched my teacher spit seeds at the watermelon booth. My friend Jeremy saw a boa constrictor swallow a grey rat, tail first. But we all wrote about feet.

When I was a teacher, I never made my students write about feet. But for a while, I too had assumed--as Mrs. Howard was doing--that my job was to motivate students with "creative topics." When I taught in an inner-city high school, I took my students on a field trip into the woods, expecting them to write beautiful poetry about the sounds of the forest. To my dismay, they came with their transistor radios and earphones and wrote about the stop at McDonald's. I used to wonder why my topics didn't work. Years later, when I began to write for publication, I realized that the problem with my topics had been that they were just that--my topics.

I remember one morning during the first month of our research project when Mrs. Howard and I leafed through 26 stories about a lost dolphin. The topic had come from the language arts textbook. Most of the stories began, "Once upon a time there was a lost dolphin," and most proceeded to tell how the dolphin's mother found him. As I looked over these stories, I felt like repeating the wisecrack a friend of mine had once made--"Circle the one that's different." I was tempted that day to tell Mrs. Howard to let her children choose their own topics, even though I knew it wasn't my role to make such a suggestion. Thankfully, Mrs. Howard saved the day. "Wouldn't we learn more if we let the kids choose their own topics?" she asked. I could have hugged her!

I couldn't wait for the next writing workshop, for the chance to see Susie and the others putting into print the bits of news they shared so eagerly each morning. Alas, it didn't work that way. When Mrs. Howard gave the children topic choice--most of them just recalled story starters from previous years. Two wrote, "My Life as a Pencil." Another wrote, "The Magic Machine." The others invented Exciting Ideas, squeezing two suicides and a murder into a single story as if they were competing with the pace and trauma of television programs. And soon they ran out of stories. As one boy told me, "You run out of exciting things to write about." Then he added, "I mean, I already wrote about a car crash, a murder, and this wicked bad fight. What else is there?"

As Mrs. Howard and I watched children sit face-to-face with the empty page, we realized what we, as a profession had done. When teachers dole out topics to the chilren, youngsters become dependent on teacher topics. And so now Mrs. Howard's students weren't so sure they wanted to be taken off writer's welfare, for they'd come to believe they had no writing territory, no turf of their own.

Mrs. Howard and I talked about the problem in the lunchroom. Other teachers had begun participating in our conversations, for writing was spreading throughout the school. When I left school at 3:45 that day, a cluster of teachers had gathered outside the front office to talk about ways to help children realize their lives were worth writing about.

When Susie and her classmates arrived at school the next morning, they found their desks pushed against the back wall and a ring of chairs facing the chalkboard. Alongside the chalkboard Mrs. Howard had hung three X-ray pictures. Two pieces of chalk and 25 children waited.

"Today, class," Mrs. Howard said, "I have...um...I have a story." She took a deep breath and stepped up to the chalkboard. She looked nervous standing by the blackboard, and strangely out of place where she usually fit so naturally. "Last night I thought about your writing," she said, "and I figured I might try writing, too. I thought about telling about my last haircut, or the new fern that's growing outside my door," she said, carefully using little everyday topics for her examples, "but I finally decided on my topic," and turning to the large X-rays which hung beside her, she added, "If you interview me about my X-rays, you can help me know what I have to say."

Soon the children were pumping her with questions. "Is that you in those X-rays?" Amy wanted to know.

"No, it's my dog," the teacher answered, disappointing several boys who'd been trying to spot the breasts on the greyish black film.

"What happened to your dog?" The children inched their chairs closer and listened, captivated by her story and by the fact that she was sharing it with them. The children missed snack time that day but no one seemed to mind. Mrs.

Howard had tapped their energy--and her own.

The following day a large plastic robot greeted me at the door to room 203. "He's mine," 8-year old Michael said. "Mrs. Howard told us it was our turn to bring something special from home and now me and Jonathon are interviewing about my robot."

"Ms. Calkins," I turned and found the small voice was calling me from inside a large Polynesian mask. The masked figure darted off into the roomful of treasures, each more elaborate than the next.

On the fringes of the classroom, Diane and Susie whispered together, oblivious to the rest of the room. For her treasure, Susie had brought a scrappy little bird's nest. As she carefully pulled it from her parka pocket, Susie told Diane about finding the nest. Other children heard their giggles and their energy and they, too, clustered around the simple little nest, each with their own story to tell of finding a bird's nest, of watching eggs hatch. Across the room, a giant plastic robot and a Polynesian mask lay abandoned on two empty desks.

I didn't realize it at the time, but this little incident foreshadowed Susie's role in her classrooms. Over the next two years, her unpretentious, easy enthusiasm would wield a powerful influence on her classmates. In her unselfconscious way, Susie led other youngsters to also take pleasure in life's small treasures. It was not unusual for one of

Susie's classmates to tell me, "Susie's the one who always thinks up good adventures," or "I have more to write about when I play with Susie because we do such fun things." But when I questioned them more closely, the great adventures turned out to be small things--shampooing the dog, throwing birdseed in each other's hair, pretending they were brides...

When Susie, Diane and the others who'd joined them finished their interview over the bird's nest, Susie said to me, "I know my bird's nest isn't too big a thing, but sometimes I think the little things that are close to you are the most important of all." Over the next two years, Susie would often use writing to frame the little things in her life, bringing meaning and significance to them. She would write about getting a teddy bear for her birthday, snuggling with her father, and sailing worms on walnut-shell boats. Once Susie said to me:

> I think the reason I can write is because all these special things happen to me and I keep seeing stories in them. Like last night, I was in my pajamas and then my father said, 'The stars are out,' and asked if I wanted to go for a ride with him on the moped... and when I was riding along, pretending I was blind and feeling the night, so many stories kept coming to me. I wonder if everyone has such a special life as I do.

Mrs. Howard did not return to assigning creative topics, and Susie did not return to content-less pieces. Because she knew her subjects well, Susie's pieces would have the ring of truth, the strength of telling details. Instead of following a narrative thread wherever it might lead, she had new control of her subjects. Because she knew the information, she could select what to include and what to exclude, steering her way through her pieces. Mrs. Howard had intended to give children topic choice, but in reality, she'd given more. She'd nudged them to write with control and with investment, and that was changing everything.

## A New Approach Towards Editing

Although the decision to let children choose their own topics was made by Mrs. Howard, the decision to let editing wait until the end of the writing process was made by me. Early in the study I asked Mrs. Howard if she would encourage children not to worry about spelling and punctuation in their first draft, and if she would try to respond first to content and only later to correctness.

Mrs. Howard was willing--but it wasn't easy for her. "My hands are sore from sitting on them," she told me one morning in late September, "but it's the only way I can keep from wielding my red pen." The notions of seeing through mistakes to content and of letting editing wait until the end go against teacher instincts. As Mrs. Howard pointed out, "My one purpose in reading children's writing used to be to find their mistakes." Yet to Mrs. Howard--and to most of us--it made sense to let editing be last but not least.

For just as she'd had the experience of reading a child's paper in search of their errors, so, too, she'd had the experience of reading the tight, voiceless pieces which result. She'd seen her children write BIG when they wanted to say ENORMOUS. She'd watched word-by-word writing, and as we talked about it, she could see that just as word-by-word reading destroys comprehension, so, too, word-by-word writing destroys fluency and logic. And so in Susie's third grade classroom--and in classrooms throughout Atkinson Elementary School--children were told not to worry over their spellings and punctuation until their pieces were done. And teachers sat on their hands.

At first children expected that when the pieces were finished, teachers would resume their error search. But soon they learned that editing is, at least in part, their responsibility; that the red pen belongs in their own hands. Susie and her classmates were each given a checklist of Things I Can Do, and these were the guides during editing. Mrs. Howard showed them how to use the lists--checking only one item at a time rather than hoping to spot every error in a single reading. The children were eager to learn; they liked inserting paragraph signs into their drafts, circling their spelling mistakes, and adding in big red punctuation marks. Then Mrs. Howard told the children when they'd done their best--and only then--they could come to her for an editing conference.

No matter how many errors still leapt from the child's paper, Mrs. Howard tried to begin editing conferences by noticing what children had done. Although this was easier in theory than in fact, she did believe that when a child had done their best, their work deserved to be celebrated. The children in time learned they could count on these conferences being largely positive. They needn't approach them in fear and trembling. Mrs. Howard especially tried to appreciate new things a child had tried, whether rightly or wrongly, the risks that had been taken. "I want them to feel confident to try new things," she said. Once, as I watched her reading a story, she came to a line which said:

I got a model from:Eric.

"Oh! You've used the colon; the first time!" was her first response, followed by the question, "How'd you go about deciding to use it in this particular place?"

She and I had learned together that there were reasons for most errors, and in this instance, there were. "You know," Brad answered, "like on a birthday card: To: Brad From: Eric."

What marvelous logic! We enjoyed it; then Mrs. Howard gave Brad a quick lesson on the colon. As I left, Brad was making lists, each one introduced with a colon, correctly used.

That was the rhythm of every editing conference. A few minutes to appreciate what the writer had done, then a few minutes to teach something new. Then, when Mrs. Howard figured she'd gotten enough mileage out of a piece, she'd simply correct the remaining errors, and the writer was ready for a final draft.

"At first I worried this was an inefficient way to teach mechanics," Mrs. Howard said later in the year, "but if you think about it, the really inefficient way is what we've been doing all along--teaching quotation marks in third grade, fourth grade, fifth, sixth, seventh...with children never learning them."

We soon discovered that when skills are taught in context, they're learned as well as taught. And because Mrs. Howard's children viewed themselves as writers, "editing tips" became such a hot item in her classroom that children learned them by eavesdropping. If Mrs. Howard taught paragraphing in one individual editing conference, inevitably the children whose desks were near would listen in on the conference, and soon paragraphing would have spread like wildfire throughout the classroom. By February of third grade, Mrs. Howard's students could articulate the uses for twice as many kinds of punctuation as could the third graders across the hall who'd been studying punctuation each week through dittos, drills, and tests (Calkins, 1980). More importantly, Mrs. Howard's students liked punctuation.

"Punctuation lets you know where the sentence ends," Chip explained. "Otherwise one minute you'd be sledding down the hill, the next minute you'd be in the kitchen, without even stopping."

"Punctuation makes writing sound better," another child said, "I mean, it doesn't have a sound, but it gives sounds to all the other words."

The effectiveness of this approach to editing was nowhere more evident than in the changes in the writing of the less able students in Mrs. Howard's classroom. This is Greg's writing, less than three months after his story about the two cars crashing:

Goofy the cowboy Dec 18

When goofy was a little boy
every body teased him. An he
grew up being teased. Goofy had
funny ears and funny nose and
Legs. And he didn't Like it a
bit. Then he Started to get
mad Then!! he got some guns
and had fun. And killed a few
people. But he didn't care a bit.
He was Having fun. Then he

Was the king of the village. And had a blast. NO body would teased him any more. Then the people of the village made a law you couldn't kill any body. And goofy got mad and disobey and went to Jail.

## A New Classroom Structure

The organization and management of the classroom, too, was changing. Previously, Mrs. Howard, like so many of us, figured "creative" writing required a "creative" classroom structure. And so each week the writing class hosted new approaches, new agendas, and new roles. But soon we found that neither the research project, nor the writing classroom, fit well into this kaleidoscope. For when the classroom structures were continually changing, Mrs. Howard and I needed to spend all our time choreographing and directing. We wanted, instead, to observe young writers at work. And so within a few weeks, Mrs. Howard began to build a consistent, simple structure to her writing classroom.

In time we realized this was not only convenient for us, it was also crucial for the children. "Creative" classroom structures do not give children freedom, as we might suppose. When her classroom environment was always changing, always haphazard, this not only put Mrs. Howard into the position of choreographing, it also put the children into the position of waiting for her changing agendas.

Once Susie and her classmates knew they would write every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 11:00-12:20, they could plan ahead for writing time and they could approach each writing workshop knowing there would be a tomorrow. Having a predictable routine gave children greater control of their craft.

The children also knew that within each workshop, they could anticipate a routine which included an hour-long workshop for writing and conferences, followed by a meeting to share work-in-progress. When other teachers heard about this consistency, they were surprised. "You mean there isn't a new kick-off for each day?" they asked. "Isn't it boring for the kids to just open their writing folders and begin work?" What these teachers didn't realize is that the simplicity of the schedule allowed children to develop approaches to writing which were complex, changing and unique to each individual. Susie often began the workshop by rereading her pieces. "I try to hear them in my mind," she'd tell me. "I want to catch onto how they flow." Birger often met with several friends and the group helped each member decide on their direction for the day. Other children mapped upcoming sections, or simply stared into space. Like artists in a studio, these writers were able to discover the complexity, challenge and choices of their craft.

The juxtaposition of a complex changing craft within a simple consistent environment freed children to make choices throughout the process of their craft. A writing process teacher from New York City recently explained the ironic importance of having a few, simple rules.

> Because I insist all children are involved in the writing process during writing time, I can give children the freedom to move naturally and independently between rehearsal, drafting, revision and editing. Because I insist that when one piece is finished, another is begun, I do not have to set class deadlines. Because children know all final work must be edited, they can edit when they are ready. Because I insist all children do not disturb others with their peer conferences and because I've taught them how to have productive conferences, the kids can talk together with whomever, whenever they need help.

It's significant to realize that the most creative environments in our society are not ever-changing ones. The artist's studio, the researcher's laboratory, and the scholar's library are each deliberatly kept simple so as to support the complexities of the work. They are deliberately kept predictable, so the unpredictable can happen. Similarly, Mrs. Howard and I became convinced that only when writing workshops are simple and consistent can teachers and children respond to the complexities of their craft.

## A New Pace

When the year began, writing fit into 18 minute time slots. The entire school day was like that: piecey, a collage of little bits. Graves likened the schedule to driving in city traffic: the children shifted from first to second gear, but never got into high gear, for there were no broad stretches of time.

In their writing, the children anticipated the stacatto rhythm of their classroom. In September they whipped off papers in quick bursts. It was a pace they knew well, for ours is a first-draft only society, a land of frozen waffles, of rushing about, of commercials every seven minutes. Detachment is built into our time frames. There is no time for sustainment; there is no time for doing one's best, then for making one's best better.

Perhaps the most important change in the management of the writing classroom was that Mrs. Howard began to give long stretches of time for writing. She and I learned together that writing requires a different pace than we are used to in our schools. As Susie said in late third grade, "You need to have all the time you want for a piece of writing. Otherwise you're afraid to look back, afraid to see that it's not what you wanted, that it's not all you could do."

Even though Mrs. Howard was soon giving children several hours a week for writing, they wanted more time. By late October, children often knocked on the door to the staff room during their lunch hour to ask Mrs. Howard if they could bring pencil and paper outside to write on the playground. One time Susie and Diane asked if they could write a funeral for a squirrel they'd found dead on the playground. Another time they had begun at home to compose a play together and they wondered if they could finish writing it during recess. Other teachers marveled that the children would ask to write during recess. "How do you get your kids wanting to write?" they asked Mrs. Howard. "We let them teach us what they know," Mrs. Howard smiled, "and give them time to do their best. It's simple--but it's changed everything." And it had.

The shelves in room 209 had become a display case for fossils, seashells and a model airplane. Mrs. Howard's X-rays hung from a clothesline. "You can tell a good writing classroom by the presence of children's interests and information in the room," Don Graves had once said, and his words were proving true. Only in this room, the teacher's interests and information were present also. The third grade plateau had been broken--for the teacher, and for the children. There was a new energy in the room, a new kind of ownership. And the changes had only just begun.

## Chapter 4

## People Dont' Grow Like Butterflies

Butterflies grow through metamorphoses, but for us human beings, change is usually not so sudden. Instead, it happens in bits and pieces, in spurts and plateaus. Mrs. Howard had not changed overnight.

She still gave spelling tests every Friday; she still taught social studies through dittos and textbooks. Her children still read Basals rather than library books. Although desks were arranged in clusters rather than rows and children's projects lined the edges of the classroom, many things had not changed. The day was still compartmentalized into separate subjects; the curriculum still followed textbooks; and the children still worked silently much of the time. Writing was the exception, not the new rule. Mrs. Howard's teaching had become a combination of contrasts--of teacher-directed and child-centered, of skills-in-context and skills-in-isolation.

These polarities never went away, not that year, anyhow. The visitors who came to see Mrs. Howard's classroom often commented afterwards to me that it was strange to see children learning through interaction, through pacing their own work, through using skills in the context of writing...and yet to see this against the backdrop of a chalkboard full of references to workbooks, Basal readers, pre-tests and post-tests.

I used to wish the polarities would ease away, that child-centered learning would replace teacher-directed instruction. But Mrs. Howard had a firm grounding in traditional approaches to teaching--and I was not around to support changes during her social studies, science and reading classes.

Although I would have preferred it had Mrs. Howard made a radical and complete transformation, visitcrs to the classroom were heartened to see that a traditional teacher, well-steeped in textbooks, workbooks and prepackaged curricula, could lead such a successful writing workshop. In fact, the Assistant Superintendent from Guilderland, New York, recently recalled her visit to Atkinson, saying, "What impressed me the most was not Mrs. Giacobbe's wonderful first grade--we all know there are remarkable teachers who can do remarkable things." Then she added, "What impressed me most were the other classrooms, where I saw very traditional teachers doing very remarkable things."

In truth, Mrs. Howard's grounding in teacher-directed instruction was probably part of the success of her writing workshop. Because she was accustomed to being an integral part of her students' learning, Mrs. Howard was never tempted to simply set children free. This was important, for by late October the children didn't need Mrs. Howard in the ways they once had. They chose their topics, regulated their pace, and they were audiences for each other. They didn't need Mrs. Howard to prod and cajole them into writing or to silence them with the approaching click of her heels. How easy it would have been for Mrs. Howard to bask in her success, and then to correct spelling mistakes during the writing workshop! But she had never been an advocate of the "set children free" philosophy. She was accustomed to being an integral part of her students' learning. And so--quite unconsciously--she set out to find a new place for herself in the writing workshop.

Two factors seemed to shape the writing-teacher identity which emerged. One was Mrs. Howard's new understanding of writing. During that year, she began to try her hand at writing. From me and first-hand experience, she developed a feel for the process of writing. It had been a revelation for her to learn that revision is central to the writer's craft and to consider qualities such as telling details, focus and voice. A second influence was her participation in the research. I suspect the specifics of what she learned from the youngsters were less important than the stance of learning from them. Because the emphasis of the research was on writing as thinking, Mrs. Howard approached the children wanting to understand their thought processes. "What problems are you trying to solve?" she'd wonder. "What dilemmas are you wrestling with?"

They are unusual questions for teachers to ask, for we are more apt to be interested in solutions than in problems, to see our role as delivering answers rather than as posing challenges. Yet both influencing factors had led Mrs. Howard to a new appreciation for the wrestling, the reaching, and the discovery which are essential to the craft of writing, and to all disciplines. For at the heart of science, there is the scientific method; at the heart of art, there is craftsmanship. At the heart of writing, there is a cycle of rehearsal, drafting, revision and more revision. As Bruner points out, when we detour our children around problem solving/problem finding, we detour them around the essence of a discipline (1966):

> A body of knowledge is given life and direction by the conjectures and dilemmas that brought it into being and sustained its growth.
>
> There is nothing more central to a discipline than its way of thinking. There is nothing more important to its teaching than to provide the child with the earliest opportunity to learn that way of thinking. (p. 159)

When the research project was almost over, Mrs. Howard told me that there was one thing she'd learned which mattered more than anything. "I used to try to short-cut the kids' work," she said. "I wanted to save time, to protect them from frustration...but I didn't realize the price we were all paying."

Her role had changed, for now it centered on extending rather than by passing children's problem-solving behavior. She did this by engaging the children in their writing and then by giving them the time and the permission to explore and to experiment with their writing. She spent most of her time moving among the desks, working with individuals and small clusters of children. Watching her, I was reminded of the circus stunt man who sets plates spinning on the ends of long sticks and then watches. When a plate begins to wobble, the circus man moves over and with his fingertip he gives the plate more spin, then watches for when the plates begin to wobble. "Keep it up," Mrs. Howard would say. "Brad, are you working?" "Renee, why don't you read it to Heather?" "Jeremy, can I help you?" With light touches, she kept her plates spinning. These brief conferences made it possible for longer conferences to also take place.

Conferencing seemed so simple at the time, a natural minuet of listening and response, of watching and extending. Mrs. Howard didn't deliberate over what questions to ask, not anymore than we plan how to respond when we meet a friend. We just ask, "How are you doing?" and then listen and follow where the conversation leads.

Yet now when I work with teachers, I often find learning to conference well poses more problems than anything else. They want to know how to begin a conference; they ask for a list of questions which will lead to revision, they wonder how long a conference should last. I shake my head and wonder if it really helps to analyze Mrs. Howard's conferences, to take apart that which seemed so flowing and easy. If I had the time with these teachers, I would not talk about conferencing so much as I would engage them in their own case study research and writing. For I suspect conferencing is only hard when it does not emerge naturally out of an interest in children's thinking and in their writing process.

In time, Mrs. Howard and I became very conscious of "the art of conferencing." We eventually theorized together about why some conferences are more effective than others, and we even compiled a list of productive questions to ask during conferences. But none of this happened until we were well into the study. The awareness of conferencing as a technique came only because the visitors who came through the classroom continually asked, "How do you know what questions to ask in a conference?"

Later, we'll look at some of our answers to their question, but for now it is enough to say that Mrs. Howard didn't know what questions to ask. Neither did I. Mrs. Howard simply felt her way along. She asked questions and made suggestions based on her interest in children's thinking, on her growing trust in their ability to make choices, and on her commitment to extending their process of craft.

The first time Mrs. Howard and Susie had a writing conference was on October 2nd. Mrs. Howard had just begun to move about the classroom, reminding me of a circus man. Susie, meanwhile, had been working for an entire week on a lengthy tale about a Chinese girl named Lin Su. Although many of Susie's classmates wrote as fluently and probably as well as Susie did, none of them had undertaken a project such as the Lin Su Book. Instead, they wrote short pieces. But I don't think begining and ending a new piece every day felt important enough to Susie. She liked projects and was good at thinking up things to do. And so, on her own, she had decided to write a very, very long story.

Neither Mrs. Howard nor I had intervened in the Lin Su book--but we'd both watched as Susie went about writing it. Each day she reread the last lines from her previous entry and then added on. Her process and her product resembled a chain, a seemingly endless chain. Although at the time I noticed ways in which Susie's project differed from her friends' pieces, in retrospect I also see important similarities. For Susie, as for her classmates, writing was a continual process of moving on. None of the children seemed to reread their pieces often, reconsidering about what they'd done. Their work resembled a chain, not a cycle.

On this particular morning, Mrs. Howard asked Susie to reread a page, circling misspellings. It was a simple intervention, intended only as a lesson in spelling, yet it became one of those happy accidents of teaching, for as Susie circled her way down the page she took important steps towards learning the writer's cycle of craft.

Consider the implications of those circles. Each circle marred the paper, implying the work was not finished. Each circle suggested that writing could be a messy craft. More importantly, for the first time, it was Susie's responsibility to mark up her own paper. Always before the responsibility had been her teacher's.

As Susie reread for spelling mistakes, she paused to squint at a line, then she reread it several times, voicing the words--behaviors I hadn't seen prior to then. Her eyes climbed back up the page. They returned to the troublesome spot. Writing posed a dilemma for Susie. She was restless, questioning, dissatisfied. She appeared to be in that state of dis-equilibrium which sets the stage for problem-finding and problem-solving to occur.

"I did this wrong," Susie said finally, "The whole line." A spelling mistake can be erased, but content revisions mean messing up a paper. Susie was stuck.

Mrs. Howard saw Susie's dilemma. The girl needed a strategy for adding a sentence and more than that, she needed permission to mess up her paper. "It's okay, Susie," Mrs. Howard said, "just draw an arrow and add the sentence."

Thus it was not an elaborate lecture but a light touch which introduced this 8 year-old girl to revision. The intervention had been a wise one, for Mrs. Howard had intervened with a sense of timing, answering the question when the child was asking it. Because the strategy of adding an arrow and of messing up an early draft could be used again in new context, Mrs. Howard had provided Susie with a tool rather than simply with a solution to her problem. And so the intervention had been an economical one.

Despite the wisdom of Mrs. Howard's intervention, I was discouraged to find Susie hadn't learned from it--or at least it didn't seem she had. After circling her spelling mistakes and arrowing in the missing sentence, Susie once again treated her first draft as a final one, working with print as if it were marble, not clay. And when she started her next piece of writing, the one which followed her interview about the bird's nest, there was no indication Susie remembered about messing up the page. Instead, she drew neat margins, and then with tidy letters began a first-and-only draft. I was disappointed, for I hoped good teaching would lead to instant results.

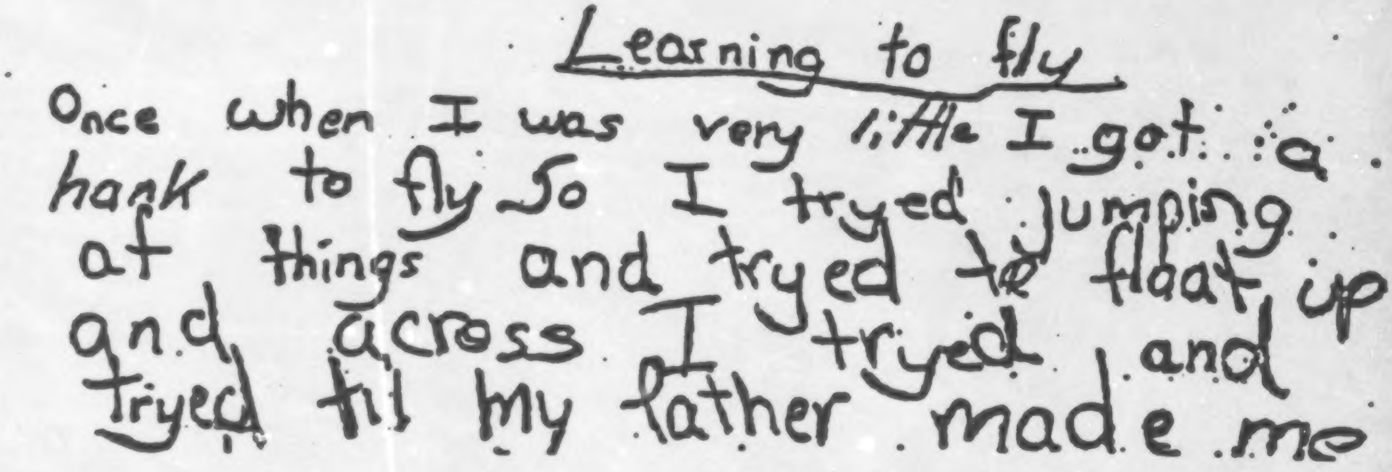
When Mrs. Howard saw that Susie had written the general title "The Bird's Nest," she and Susie talked about the nest for a minute, and about the interview Susie and Diane had just had about it. Then, because Mrs. Howard and I had been talking during lunch about helping children focus their topics, Mrs. Howard put her hand on Susie's shoulder and asked, "Susie, what is the one thing your story is about?"

Susie's eyes flickered down onto her title, The Bird's Nest. I imagined she was thinking, "Does she want the story to be about just one thing?" Susie's tight, worried face showed she wasn't sure what was expected of her. Did Mrs. Howard want her to start the story all over, writing just about how Susie's father had helped her learn to fly, for that had been the focus of the interview with Diane? Like most third graders, Susie was eager to please--but in this instance, she didn't know what was expected of her. She looked at her title, then began to erase it.

Again Mrs. Howard intervened, and for the third time she tried to show Susie that drafts can be messy. She suggested Susie scratch out rather than erase. Susie tried to do as suggested. She crossed out the title and wrote beside it. She wrote, Learning to Fly. Then she tried to continue writing her story on the messed-up paper. When Mrs. Howard left the cluster of desks at which Susie worked, I watched our pixie-like heroine put aside the messy page, bringing out a tidy new one. With careful letters, she began her story. What a conflict this must have presented to our heroine! Throughout her schooling she'd pleased teachers by being tidy, by doing things right the first time. Now, could it be that Mrs. Howard actually wanted Susie's writing to be messy?

The episode was a dramatic one, and I was ready for it to end. "No wonder children resist revision," I thought as I resigned myself to watching first drafts only.

But although wise and well-timed teaching may not lead to instant results, such interventions rarely go unheard. In their own time, children surprise us with what they have learned. Susie wrote one careful line on her tidy new piece of paper, then she muttered, "I'll copy it over tomorrow." As if it had just dawned on her that her paper needn't be a final copy, Susie's square letters opened into a loose scrawl. For the first time, Susie was writing as if there was a tomorrow.



Learning to fly

Once when I was very little I got a hank to fly So I tryed jumping at things and tryed to flaat up and across I tryed and tryed til my father made me

She wrote five or six lines of "Learning to Fly" before Mrs. Howard next reached her side. Again, Mrs. Howard's intervention grew out of our lunchtime discussions. "Susie, do you remember when I did my writing, how I kept on experimenting with different ways to begin my story?"

Susie nodded and I thought back to the day her teacher brought X-rays to school and told the class, "You must interview me." After the class had helped her find her story, Mrs. Howard had taken hold of a piece of chalk and clattered letters onto the chalkboard:

My dog fell out of the truck and broke her leg.

Then she had stepped back and looked at her beginning, confessing, "That's sort of a dull lead." She squiggled a line through her words and wrote a second beginning on the chalkboard:

> Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Sheba fall from the back of the truck.

"Tell who Sheba is," one child volunteered. With an arrow, Mrs. Howard added the missing information. Soon she'd woven more information into her piece, squeezing details between lines, inserting words into phrases.

Now two weeks later, Mrs. Howard drew a line under Susie's opening sentences, suggesting the youngster try several beginnings and then choose her best. This was a "process conference," although none of us knew it at the time.

Susie wrote two leads, and then a third. She and her teacher read them together.

1. Once when I was little I tried jumping off things and tried to float up and across.
2. I always wanted to fly but when I tried,

I always fell Kaboom! on the ground.

3. Kaboom! That hurt! Why can't I fly? Birds do. Whenever I try, nothing happens.

It did not matter to Mrs. Howard whether the leads got progressively better--she and I mostly cared that the children began to see writing as a process of choice.

I was learning that growth doesn't proceed evenly along an upward trajectory, and so I wasn't surprised when Susie approached her next piece, "Batting Is Fun," as if the first words written onto her page would be the final ones. This time Mrs. Howard was working with other children, but Susie again decided midway that her first draft could be a rough draft. Having relegated neatness to a later stage, she again loosened her penmanship into a scrawl and marred the paper with small corrections. As in her Lin Su story, Susie found a major problem among the smaller ones. Whereas in the earlier piece, the problem had been missing information, here it was incorrect sequence. Both times, content revisions were prompted by an incongruity between Susie's initial text and the event she was describing, a kind of revision which seems particularly easy for young writers.

Again Susie was stuck. It didn't occur to her that the arrow could solve this problem as it had the former one, and so she lined up behind Mrs. Howard and waited her turn for help. But something must have clicked for Susie that day. From then on, she began inventing her own ways to move print about on her paper. Within a week she was happily adding cross-outs, arrows and insert codes into her rough drafts. She independently wrote three rough drafts to "My Dog's Pill" and four to "Batting Is Fun." She not only remembered the lead-writing strategy, she cheerfully wrote seven leads to one story, all without prompting! I was flabbergasted.

Mrs. Howard had only worked with Susie on six occasions, and each had been for just a minute or two. Yet the interventions seemed to have set Susie well on the road towards learning the writer's cycle of craft.

Not only Susie, but most of her classmates as well, had already learned some crucial lessons:

1. Already, Susie had learned to approach a piece of writing knowing there would be a tomorrow. She could relegate concerns for spelling and neatness until a later draft, and in earlier drafts concentrate on what she wanted to say.

2. Because Susie and her classmates were writing on topics they knew well, many of them had found incongruencies between their pieces of writing and the events they were attempting to retell. These incongruencies led to a correcting sort of revision.

3. Susie and most of her classmates had already learned some revision strategies. They knew how to

> use codes to add information into the draft,; they knew how to use arrows to move a section from one place to another. They knew how to write successive drafts on a given topic (although the sophistication of the changes between crafts was questionable).

Susie had learned quickly. Clearly, Mrs. Howard's interventions would not have had such an impact on this young learner had Susie not been engaged in her writing. Because she cared about her topics, because she was writing for readers, Susie was an eager learner. But also, Mrs. Howard's interventions probably would not have had such an impact had they not emerged out of observation, with a sense of timing. Still, even considering all that, Susie was learning faster than I could account for. Or so it seemed.

# Chapter 5

## Revision: A Closer Look

The leaves had not yet fallen from the trees, and already most of the third graders were revising independently. Like a proud parent, Mrs. Howard brought their leads and drafts to the first grade classroom and shared them with Mrs. Giacobbe. Back in her classroom, Mrs. Howard and I marveled at how quickly the youngsters had learned to revise. It was as if Eureka had been reached.

Then came the surprising and unsettling news. Mrs. Giacobbe's 6 year-olds had taken to revision like fish to water. I was skeptical. Many researchers question whether 10 year-olds can revise; she was telling me revision was easy for first graders?

I hurried down the long corridor to their classroom. Inside the door, the elf-like girl sat on the floor with her story spread in front of her. She stapled a flap onto the end of her story and then added more information onto the additional space. When she saw me, the youngster stood up and help her scroll-like story chin high, saying, "My story's as tall as I am!"

At a nearby table, a youngster solemnly alternated between writing and scrunching up her story. She patted the well-worn paper and proudly said, "There, now it's all loved up."

Another youngster had written a book. He turned the pages, saying as he did so, "A robin, a eagle, a parakeet." Then he called to one of his friends, "Hey, Matt, what other kinds of birds are there?" Matt suggested vultures, and the young writer returned to his book to add one more page onto it. Mrs. Giacobbe worked with a fourth young writer. The two of them had realized that his story, "My Birthday," was out of sequence and together they were reordering his pages.

I was more skeptical than ever. Was this revision? Revision, as I know it, is audience aware, abstract, reversible, and it involves shuttling back and forth between writing and reading, between involvement and distance, between looking back and looking forward. I thought of the little girl with her chin-high story. Had she been revising out of concern for audience and clarity, or instead out of the fun of stapling and seeing her story grow? She hadn't seemed to weigh options, but instead, to add on. She hadn't seemed to view her first draft as tentative, but instead, as unfinished. "Her version of revision is certainly not my own," I thought to myself.

And then I realized what I had done. How easy it is to see what children cannot do rather than seeing what they can do. Of course, her version of revision was not my own--it was, instead, her own.

Because she was 6 and I wasn't, her thinking was different from mine. (How clever of me to detect this!) She'd been revising concretely more than abstractly, viewing her draft as non-reversible rather than as reversible. She'd been revising with print like she revised with clay, with blocks, and with bathtub bubbles. She'd been revising for the play of it.

Only when I define revision as abstract and reversible and involving a simultaneous interaction of concerns and strategies might adults have exclusive claim to it. How right Bruner was when he suggested that the foundations of any subject may be taught to anybody at any age in some form (1963).

> The basic ideas that lie at the heart (of all disciplines) are as simple as they are powerful. It is only when such basic ideas are put in formalized terms...that they are out of the reach of the young child. (p. 12)

And what of Susie? I'd naively assumed that beneath her drafts, leads and revisions there was a process of thought which was similar to my own. Yet as an 8 year-old, Susie's thinking was probably somewhere in transition between thinking which is bound to activity and thinking which is abstract, between the child's ego-centrism and the adolescent's ability to imagine views from many vantage points, between the pre-schooler's present tense and the older child's ability to shuttle among various time frames. Not only her thinking but also her revision was probably in transition. As long as I continued to assume revision meant the same to her as it did to me, I would miss out on her changing understanding of revision. I returned to my data and began to scrutinize it, hoping to understand what Susie was and was not doing as she travelled from one draft to the next.

What I found was startling. Out of an eagerness to please, Ssuie had adopted the posture but not necessarily the thinking of a reviser. Whereas once neatness had been prized, now the premium was on messiness, and school children are pros at learning what is valued. Even in the first grade classroom, the youngsters had caught on to the new values. One 6 year-old said to me, "Mrs. Giacobbe likes good stories and yucky writing. What do you like?" Susie, like this first grader, had learned revisions were the hot item for her researcher and her teacher. And so, by mid-October she was revising with glee...but she had only begun to understand the purposes behind revision.

When I scrutinized the drafts which had so impressed Mrs. Howard and me, I found that sometimes the only difference between one draft and the next was the size of the print. Yet Susie chose to write drafts and took great pleasure in labeling the draft numbers on top of each page. She sorted her drafts into chronological order at least once a day. When she brought her writing to Mrs. Howard, she was more apt to announce, "This is my fourth draft," than to say, "I've improved my story." The emphasis was on the activity rather than the reason for it.

The baby babbles for the sake of babbling, only later realizing that his voice can be an instrument for communication. The youngster experiments with a typewriter for the fun of pounding on the keys, only later realizing the strings of letters can spell words. "Later" had not yet come for Susie; she was only beginning to learn that revision can be a tool for powerful purposes.

A few of her early revisions had been purposeful. She'd found errors and fixed them, as in "Lin Su" where a line was left out, and "Batting Is Fun" where the sequence was wrong. The changes had been small ones. They did not affect the voice or framework of the draft. Instead they worked within the confines of the pre-existing draft. I named this common kind of revision "Refining." Next to adding on (to making stories grow), this may be the simplest kind of revision (Calkins, 1981).

In Susie's eyes, most of her revisions fell into this category. When I asked her in early November whether she liked to revise, her answer was, "Yes, if there's a good reason, like it's not neat or you see spelling mistakes or you have the parts mixed up."

Although Susie didn't seem to realize it, in the fall of third grade her more comprehensive revisions tended not to involve corrections, as she seemed to think, but instead to be new--and seemingly random--versions of a draft. In "Batting Is Fun," for example, Susie corrected the sequence, then said, "Now I'll recopy this." But she did not recopy it. Instead, she tucked the draft under her arm, chatted about baseball with a friend, and then plunged into draft 2 without looking back to the earlier draft and without making deliberate improvements on it. The second draft ended up similar in some ways, different in others; but in both cases, the relationship between the two drafts was accidental.

| Draft 1 | Draft 2 |
|---|---|
| I like to bat because the feel of the ball on the bat makes you proud that you can hit it. But you can't just pick up and hit it if it's your first time. I can now because I practice a lot and after I practice I play baseball with my sister only we don't use a wooden bat... | I like to bat because the feel of the ball on the bat makes me feel proud that I can hit it. And one reason I like batting is because it's something you can't do on your first try. I remember the first time I tried and I threw the bat up and when I tried to hit it I just swung around in circles but I practiced and practiced till finally I hit it for the first time...But when I play |

baseball with my sister
I hit popflys and I get
out but I'm still very
proud of my batting.

As the drafts show, although Susie did not deliberately use draft 1 to instruct her as she wrote draft 2, her authority over her subject and her organization increased. By the time she began draft 2, she knew her subject very well, having already written about it once. Through this strategy, Susie gained control of her subject--she did not gain control of her craft. It was by accident rather than by choice that she wrote an entirely new draft 2. She did not look between the drafts once they were both written in order to select the best, and she certainly did not take the best sections from each and combine them into a third draft. I had the feeling she could not have done those operations on her own, had she wanted to. She was riding a wave forward. Her movement between the drafts seemed random, undirected and ongoing.

Oddly enough, this same movement characterizes the early forms of her third revision strategy, one which I call "listing options." At the start of third grade the best example of this strategy was when Susie tried different leads for her pieces. I expected these leads would represent different tacts toward a subject, but when I looked closely, I saw they were instead points along a single progression.

Each lead was deeper into the same sequence of events:

My Dog's Pill

11/6

> Every time I come home from school I have to give my dog a pill and it is very very hard.
>
> ---
>
> There now you won't see it. The pill is way down deep in the cookie.
>
> ---
>
> Down it's going, down. Eat it! Oh, no, how am I going to get you to eat it?
>
> ---
>
> Now, today, will you please eat it, for me, the one that feeds you?

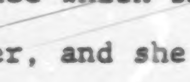
Although I call the strategy Susie used here "Listing Options," the word options may be a deceptive one, for it suggests choice and comparison. In the fall of third grade, Susie accurately described her lead writing this way: "I keep on going until I find one I really like." Her movement between leads was an ongoing forward motion--and her products reflected her process.

As I gathered this wealth of details about Susie's writing, I began to see patterns in it. Instead of slotting my information into someone else's schemata, I was beginning to build my own.

At first I thought Susie's early revisions could be characterized as belonging to three very different categories. They were either Refining, Parallel Drafting, or Listing Options. But more recently, I have begun to recognize that her early revisions also share some characteristics in common.

1. In early third grade, Susie's revisions proceed along a single track. Rarely do we see her shuttling back and forth between processes. If she is parallel drafting, she continues to do this throughout an entire draft. If she is refining a piece, she does not stop to draft. If she is listing leads, she does not stop to reread or revise them, nor does she let a good lead proceed naturally into a draft.

2. Susie does not weigh alternatives abstractly. Each sentence which she considers is put onto the paper in front of her, and she only decides against using a sentence after the entire sentence has been written out.

3. Susie operates in the present tense. The content of her writing rarely seems tentative, for she does not anticipate content changes. Although she may write several drafts, each draft--at the moment of conception--tends to be considered as the one-and-only version of the story. Her consciousness does not span several drafts. Instead, in her mind's eye, the first version is replaced by the second, following this pattern: $\cancel{1} \longrightarrow 2$ rather than this one: 

. For example, when parallel

drafting, Susie does not reread the earlier draft. It has been replaced; it no longer exists for her. Similarly, when refining, she corrects something which was wrong...and the error is gone. When writing leads, each lead replaces the one before it. Not surprisingly, Susie usually selects the final lead as the beginning of her piece. In none of Susie's early revision strategies is there interaction between options, for such a dialogue would require Susie's consciousness to span several time/space frames.

# Chapter 6

## When Children Dialogue with Each Other They Begin to Dialogue with Their Texts

As I gained a picture of Susie's early revision and saw tentative links between her revision and her thinking, many things began to click for me. Observations I was making as a researcher fit with observations I had made as a teacher; they were combining to form patterns.

Although I remember looking at my generalizations about Susie's early revisions, astounded that hundreds of hours of detailed observation had boiled down to three such simple findings, I was at the same time finding that their simplicity was their power. I'd made observations before. What was new for me was that now I could fit flash observations into a larger scheme. Whereas before, learning involved piling more and more notions onto a growing pile of disparate ideas, now the mishmash of ideas was gaining order from a few simple organizing principles.

Although I didn't know it at the time, by characterizing patterns in Susie's writing at the start of third grade, I prepared myself to recognize changes. Unless one sees regularities, it's hard to see irregularities. The presence of patterns provides a ground against which one can see changes. Had I only recorded the flux of Susie's day-to-day behaviors, it would have been hard to see changes in her writing. Then, too, it would have been hard to see changes had I continued to ask only "Is she revising?" It would have been hard to plot movement against a base-line of nos, yeses, and maybes.

In November and December of third grade, Susie's growth in writing seemed to occur primarily in these three areas:

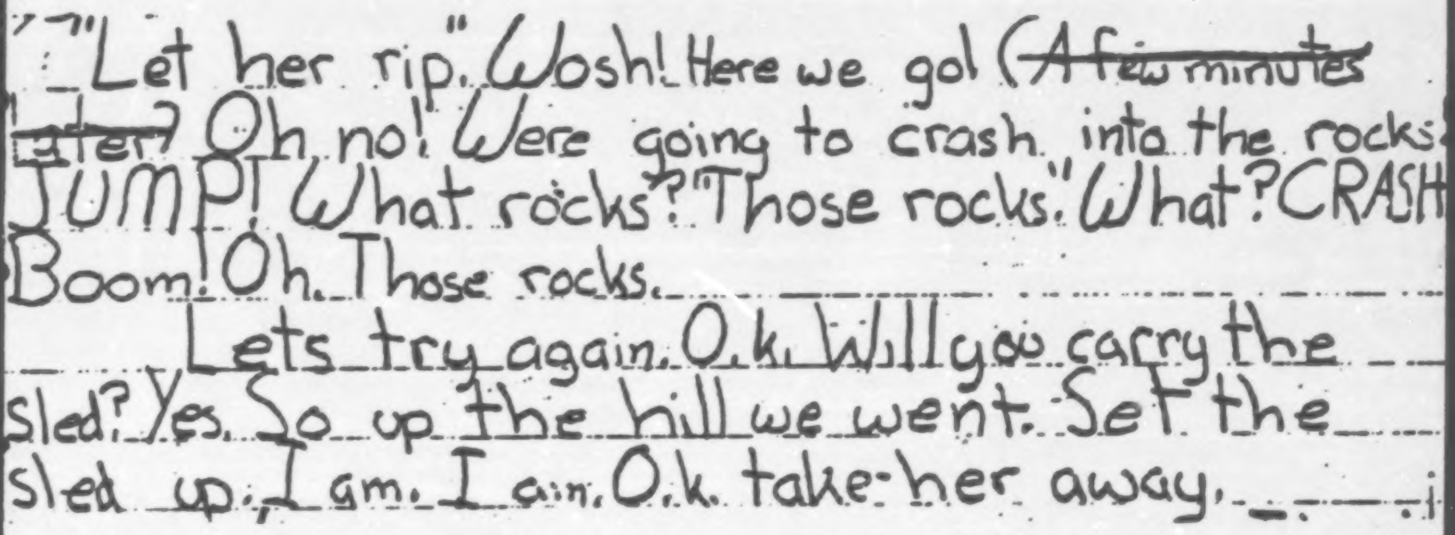
1. Susie developed an executive function.
2. Susie began to internalize concrete physical strategies.
3. Susie developed a wider and more flexible field on concerns.

The first of these changes will be the subject of this chapter. The other two will be the subject of the following chapter.

Susie Develops an Executive Function

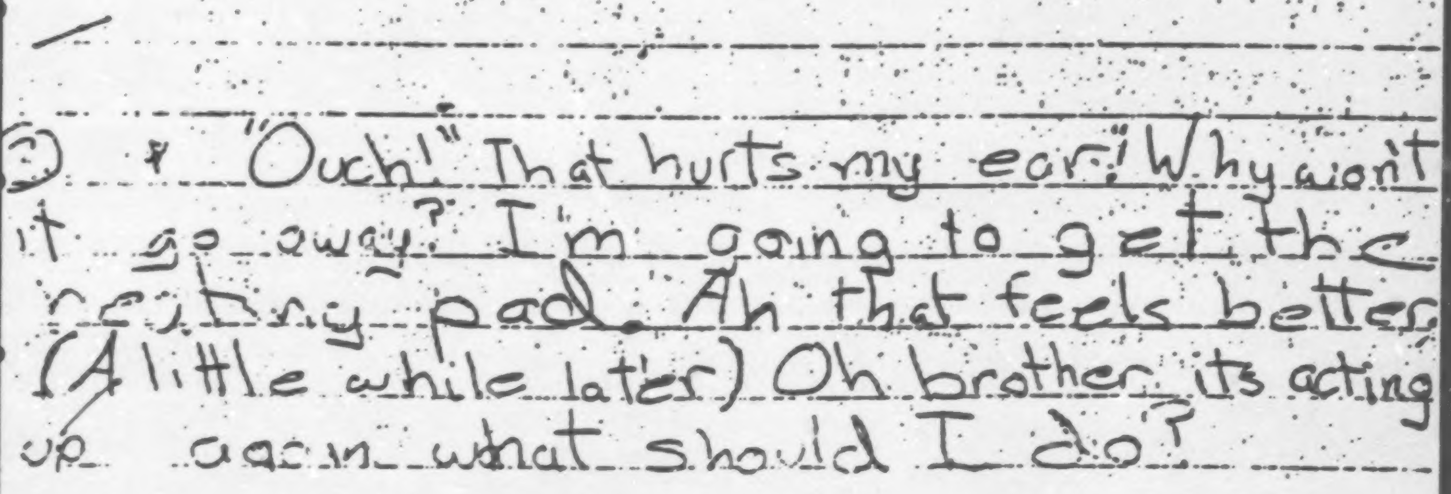
A lot of things clicked for me when I realized Susie's revisions proceeded full force along a single track. As a teacher, I had joked that third graders could do anything except do something in moderation. Once they got going, there was no stopping them. When my children had used exclamation marks, they'd used hundreds of them--developing a hierarchy of fat and thin ones to show gradations in excitement. When they wrote with dialogue, chit-chat consumed their stories. When they wrote with detail, they waded through endless minutia.

As a teacher, I'd been exasperated by the way my third graders overdid whatever they did. As a researcher, I could view this phenomenon not as an error, but as a window onto the children's thinking. Instead of despairing over Diane's reliance on chit chat in these little stories, I wondered why she seemed unable to switch out of the dialogue.



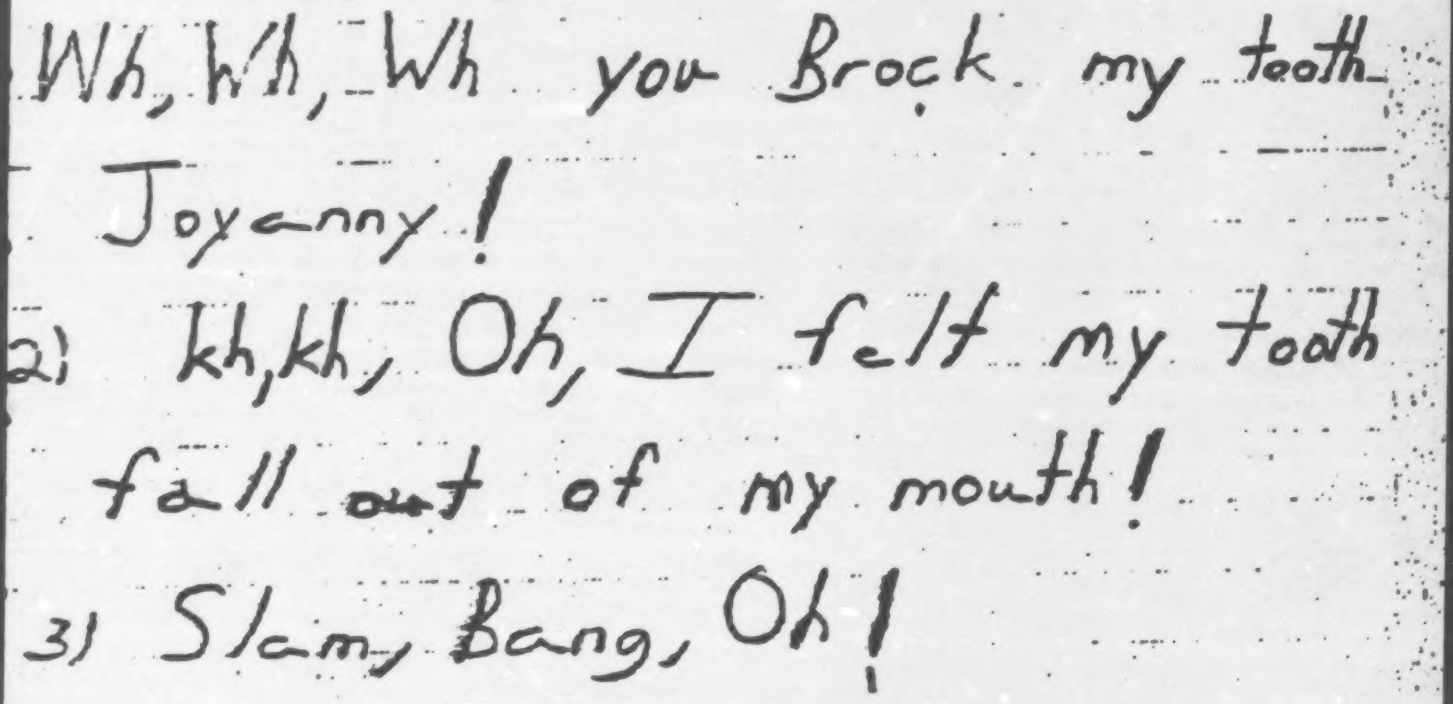
"Let her rip." Wosh! Here we go! (~~A few minutes later~~? Oh no! Were going to crash into the rocks: JUMP! What rocks? "Those rocks." What? CRASH Boom! Oh. Those rocks.

Lets try again. O.k. Will you carry the sled? Yes. So up the hill we went. Set the sled up. I am. I am. O.k. take her away.



"Ouch!" That hurts my ear! Why won't it go away? I'm going to get the heating pad. Ah that feels better. (A little while later) Oh brother its acting up again what should I do?

I wondered if there was a connection between Diane's entrapment into chit-chat and Birger's entrapment into sound effects and exclamation marks. These are three of his leads, and they are quite representative of his writing in early third grade:



Wh, Wh, Wh you Brock my tooth Joyanny!

2) kh,kh, Oh, I felt my tooth fall out of my mouth!

3) Slam, Bang, Oh!

In "Learning to Fly," Susie--like Diane and Birger--had seemed to get locked into a single tone of voice, a single perspective in the writing. As I thought about this phenomenon, I realized that Susie and Diane and Birger's products were similar to their processes. The reliance on dialogue, the over-use of sound effects, were probably related to the one-tracked irreversible thinking of 8 year-olds. So, too, when children's leads followed along a single tangent, when second drafts were sequels rather than revisions, we see symptoms of a kind of thinking which tends to be forward-moving, irreversible.

I was reading developmental theory with new eyes then, asking, "Does this match what I am seeing?" In many instances I was surprised to find my hard-earned findings could have been deducted from developmental theories. Bruner (1966), for example, had commented on the one-track quality of children's thinking long before I did. In A Theory of Instruction, he wrote:

> There is a great distance between the one tracked mind of the young child and the ten year old's ability to deal with an extraordinarily complex world.
>
> Intellectual development is marked by an increasing capacity to deal with several alternatives simultaneously, to tend to several sequences during the same period of time, and to allocate time and attention in a manner appropriate to these multiple demands. (p. 6)

Nor was I alone in the recognition that the one-tracked thinking of 8 year-olds affects their writing. Dr. Carl Bereiter (1979), emphasizes that writers need "a central executive monitor" to shuttle attention back and forth between reading, talking, writing, thinking. Bereiter points out that whereas the nature of conversations oscillates participants between uttering, considering and uttering, the nature of writing is different. Oscillations are not built into the act of writing; they must be supplied by the writer. Whereas Susie had known for a long time how to read, write, question, plan, and so forth, what she was less able to do was to shuttle between these activities.

Flower and Hayes (1980), two other cognitive researchers, have suggested that some adult writers also have difficulty shuttling between one operation and another:

> One of the greatest things protocol analysis reveals is that a great part of skill in writing is the ability to monitor and direct one's own composing process...Handling the very process of composing itself is a demanding and, no doubt, learned procedure.
>
> ...not all our subjects are able to tell themselves to jot down ideas and connect them later when it would be useful to do so. They seem to lack this degree of conscious control over the process of writing itself. (p. 39)

Now that I saw developmental roots to the lack of flexibility and organization in Susie's early revisions, I expected her strangely pure and deliberated revision to continue through third grade.

Susie began her next piece, "The Big Fish," (10/11) by writing five leads. While writing the leads her focus seemed to follow the moving tip of her pencil. She rarely paused to reconsider or to plan, and for the most part, the leads proceeded along a single continuum. So far, she met my expectations.

"Hey, Diane, listen to these," Susie said, nudging her friend. As Susie read her leads to Diane, she also read them to herself. The fifth lead went like this, and it was the one Diane paid attention to:

> Our boat was drifting on the water. It was a beautiful warm day. The sun was just going down behind some hills and all was peaceful. Just then I felt something on my line. I thought it was a snag but it wasn't.

"How'd it feel like on the line?" Diane asked, a response which was probably modeled after Mrs. Howard's conferences. Children's responses to each other's writing often seemed to be modeled after their teacher's responses; when teachers take over control of students' work, students do this to each other, and so, too, the opposite is true. It is not coincidental that some classrooms are filled with commands such as "You should do this,"...and "write that," whereas others are filled with questions such as "How did it feel?" "What'd you do next?"

Susie did not answer Diane's question. Instead she ducked her head back towards her paper, reread the lead, and wrote another draft, adding the missing information. When Susie finished, she showed it to me. (Alterations are underlined.)

Lead #5 - Draft # 2

Our boat was drifting on the water. It was a beautiful warm day. The sun was just going down behind some hill. Just then, on my pole it felt like someone was trying to take the pole (it) away from me. I thought it was a snag but it wasn't, because it wriggled.

Like Diane, I didn't give suggestions, but because I was sitting beside her, I had inadvertently helped Susie switch from writing to rereading and reconsidering. When she read the lead to me, she found a specific problem. "How will you know I'm fishing?" she said, not expecting me to answer. She solved the problem by writing another draft of the lead, then correcting it and recopying it. Now she was pleased with her introduction to "The Big Fish." "This is the only time I ever worked on one little section really hard for a long, long time," she said. "But I got it right.

Lead 5 - Draft 1

Our boat was drifting on the water. It was a beautiful warm day. The sun was just going down.

Lead 5 - Draft 4

Me and my father were fishing at a lake. I looked in the water and saw a quick flash. It was a school of fish that looked like silver dollars.

Her fourth draft shows little semblance to her first one--what is more important than the fact that they are different is that there are deliberate reasons for the differences. Revision, in this instance, does not involve an arbitrary forward motion, nor is it bound to following a single recipe for revision. Instead, Susie had alternated between random drafting, writing, reading, correcting, recopying and talking. It had taken her 287 written words and 18 revision codes (cross-outs, arrows, stars, insert codes) to build a beginning which satisfied her. And it had taken a great many shifts between processes.

Susie continued to rework "The Big Fish" with revisions we will look at more closely later--for now it is enough to say the girl continued to defy my expectations. What had happened? No sooner had I decided that the one-track quality of her early revisions was developmental, than her writing began to weave its way among many processes. What had brought about such sudden changes? Had her development been turned to fast-forward?

The question sounds like a joke, yet without jesting, I answer: Yes. Yes, her development had been switched to fast-forward, something which would happen time and again during the study. Over the next year-and-a-half, Susie would continually surprise me by pushing beyond her "developmental level." In doing so, she not only showed me the kind of changes in writing which we might expect of a much older child, she also reminded me time and again that the presence of developmental characteristics does not mean we carry within us a blueprint for growth in writing. Teaching--in the richest sense of the word--interacts with development and changes it. Teaching can be the cutting edge for learning, as Vygotsky (1962) stresses in this passage:

> What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening function. Instruction usually precedes development. (pp. 101, 104)

Instruction does not necessarily come from the hands of a teacher. In "The Big Fish" episode, Diane and I had unknowingly been the instructors. By listening to Susie's work-in-progess, we had encouraged her to listen to it as well. Our presence had helped provide Susie with a central executive monitor (Bereiter).

It was turning out that the workshop hum in Mrs. Howard's classroom was important in ways none of us had anticipated. Mrs. Howard had encouraged children to share their work while it was in draft form because she knew sharing could provide motivation; it could keep the plates spinning. Now we were finding that audiences also provided another important function, for even when children said nothing at all in response to each other's pieces, the mere presence of an audience during writing was dislodging writers from their one-tracked adding-on.

Now when I work as a consultant in schools, teachers often approach me with worry, asking, "How do I guarantee my children are being helpful to each other in their 1:1 conferences?" The worried teachers and I sometimes talk about the importance of modeling good conferences, and often I stress that children are more apt to model themselves after us if we are consistent in our conference tactics. Sometimes the teachers and I brainstorm ways to improve child:child conferences. But always I tell teachers they can relax. Even if nothing is said, it is crucially important for young writers to have listeners throughout the drafting process rather than simply when the piece is finished and published. Even if audiences simply listen and retell what they hear, they will have given writers a chance to reread their stories, and in doing so, the audiences have dislodged young writers and allowed them to switch processes. Audience will have provided writers with an executive function.

In time, if children have easy access to real audiences, they will internalize their audience. As we will see, Susie, soon asks herself the questions which have been asked of her. She grows to anticipate her reader's appreciation for detail and action. She learns to take into account her classmates' needs for background information. But perhaps more basic than all of this, she internalizes an executive function. She learns to switch easily, back and forth, from writer to reader, from using the hand to using the eye, from moving forward to sensing backward. And as Sondra Perl (1980) says so well, this oscillation is a crucial part of the writing process:

> Composing does not occur in a straight-forward linear fashion. The process is one of accumulating discrete words or phrases down on paper and then working from these bits to reflect upon, structure, and then further develop what one means to say. It can be thought of as a kind of 'retrospective structuring;' movement forward occurs only after one has reached back, which in turn occurs only after one has some sense of where one wants to go.

# Chapter 7

## Revision Becomes More Abstract, and the Field of Concerns Becomes Broader

My research was beginning to resemble the process of writing a novel. "It begins with a character," Faulkner says, "and once he stands up on his feet and begins to move, all I do is trot along behind him with paper and pencil, trying to keep up." It was certainly all I could do to keep up with my main character, for Susie was changing quickly.

### Internalization in Writing

Children's growth in writing, I was discovering, isn't all that different from their growth in math. In both disciplines, the learner moves from a dependence on overt physical actions towards an ability to mentally reproduce operations. Whereas at first children solve 15+3 by taking in hand 15 unifix cubes and sharing them among three people, soon the children invent shortcuts and symbolic representations. Instead of getting out their cubes, they form mental pictures of them and the sharing-out happens in their mind's eye.

Piaget has shown that such a move from overt physical actions to mental actions is typical for the middle childhood youngster. He describes the move, saying, "Internalization means that the child does not have to go about his problem solving any longer by overt trial and error, but can actually carry out trial and error in his head."

Internalization is a key concept in Susie's growth as a writer. Often over the two years I found that new operations entered Susie's writing process as concrete, systematic behaviors. For example, when she first deliberated over topic choice, she elaborately listed 10 topics, then used various sizes and numbers of stars to rank them. Once a topic was chosen, she then put parentheses beside it and within them, she wrote sub-topics, and finally, one of these became her topic. Within a few months, these steps were internalized, and Susie chose topics by staring into the sky for a few minutes, then saying, "I'm going to try writing about..."

A similar pattern characterizes the changes in Susie's lead-writing. When she first began to toy with possible leads, she did this through a stylized procedure of listing numbers 1-5 down the margin of her paper, then writing a possible beginning alongside of each. Each lead was written out in full, and they were separated from each other by a careful line. This was the procedure she followed in order to get her lead to "The Big Fish." Later in that episode, however, Susie used the lead-writing strategy to tackle a new problem, and while doing so, she short-cut the procedure.

After completing her first draft of "The Big Fish," Susie reread it. "I want to make the section where I catch the fish shorter; it should be quicker," she said. She sighed, cast her eyes about the classroom, reread the piece several times, sighed again. These were all familiar signs that she was restless, and I knew this could mean she was ready to make a breakthrough. I suspected Susie was wrestling with the logistics of how to fix a section when it's embedded into the middle of a piece.

No one came to Susie's rescue, and so she decided, quite independently, to adapt the lead writing strategy to meet her new problem. On a separate bit of paper, she listed numbers 1 to 3 as if she were writing leads. Beside both the numbers one and two, Susie tried alternate ways to write the section. Then she circled number three. She was ready to try again. For a few minutes her pencil was still. Then she brought it to the paper, held it there, ready to write. She pulled away.

I asked, "What'd you almost write?"

Susie blushed, "I was going to say, 'Just then a quick jerk awakened me and I looked and saw my pole bending,'" she said, "But it was too long." Now she was quiet again, her pencil dabbing occasionally at number three and her lips moving as she whispered more alternatives to herself. For the first time that I had seen, she was internally considering optional ways of saying something.

It's significant to notice that by listing the numbers

1 to 3 in her margin and writing leads beside two of the numbers and now pointing at the third, Susie had built a concrete scaffolding within which she could organize the flux of alternate leads which crossed her mind. It seemed that each time she considered an option, her pencil dabbed at number three. Bruner gives a similar example of the way in which a concrete operation can provide children with an internalized structure within which to operate. He writes (1963):

> In the example of the balance scale, the structure is a serial order of weights that the child has in mind. Such internal structures are of the essence: they are the internalized symbolic systems by which the child represents the world. (pp. 36, 37)

"I might try thinking back to the time and remembering what I really did," Susie said after a while, and then she rewrote the section again. But still she was not pleased. "I don't like how it fits with the rest of the story," she said, and once again she was revising. Susie later described the process this way: "I was thinking of what really happened and what would fit with the real thing and look good on paper."

As the year continued, lead writing, like topic choice, eventually became an internalized process. As Table 1 illustrates, Susie eventually considered possible leads without putting more than a word or two onto the paper.

Insert Table 1 about here

Researchers Flower and Hayes (1980, p.42) have suggested that not only for children, but for writers of all ages, growth in writing is often marked by an increasing ability to depend on procedures which become automatic and routine. By developing memory schema for certain kinds of writing and certain writing processes, writers are able to focus their attention on new, and increasingly complex aspects of writing. This is what I saw happening for Susie.

When lead-writing and topic choice became internalized, this did not mean Susie's entire writing process moved underground and became invisible. New problems were tackled, new considerations entered into her writing, and they occupied the place once filled by lead writing. A pattern emerged: something entered as a concrete operation, later it became internalized, making room for something new to be dealt with concretely. In a sense, it can be said that what entered as revision later became pre-vision.

## The Dimensions of Her Field of Concerns Were Changing

It was not only the movement and the concreteness of Susie's writing process which were changing, but also the dimensions of her field of concerns. In September, Susie's focus during writing riveted onto the moving tip of her pencil. The questions she asked related to the word at hand--is this right? What should I say in the next line? She did not seem to move from this local, text-bound level of concerns to more global ones, something which Flower and Hayes suggest is common also of the adult basic writer (1982, p. 321).

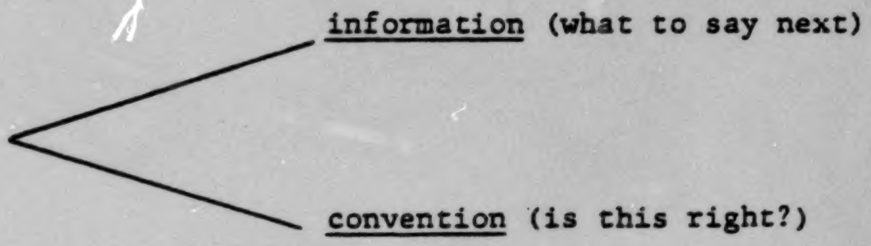
But by late November, this had begun to change. Susie's consciousness spanned a wider time-frame and took into account a greater variety of factors. During "The Big Fish" episode Susie reached back to the past, deliberately trying to bring it to bear on her thinking. She strained to recall details of the fishing trip, saying "I'm thinking back to what I really, really did then." She looked back not only to past events, but also to past drafts. Once a new draft was written, the old drafts were not totally forgotten. In this same episode, Susie also reached forward in time, anticipating both future drafts and a future audience. "Will they know what I mean?" she asked. The time dimensions of her writing process seemed to be expanding in new and important ways.

Finally, the dimensions of Susie's "field of concerns" also were expanding because she had a growing awareness of qualities of good writing and a new ability to consider several of these simultaneously. As I reported in an earlier article (Calkins, 1981), her choices now emerged from "tension--between writing for information and writing for grace, between inclusion and focus, between intended and discovered meaning."

She said, for example:

> I'm having a problem putting all the stuff that happened into the paper. I could write a big, big book on it, and I want to put just a tiny bit.... deciding what tiny bit to put down!
>
> I was thinking of what really happened and what would fit with the real thing and look good on paper.

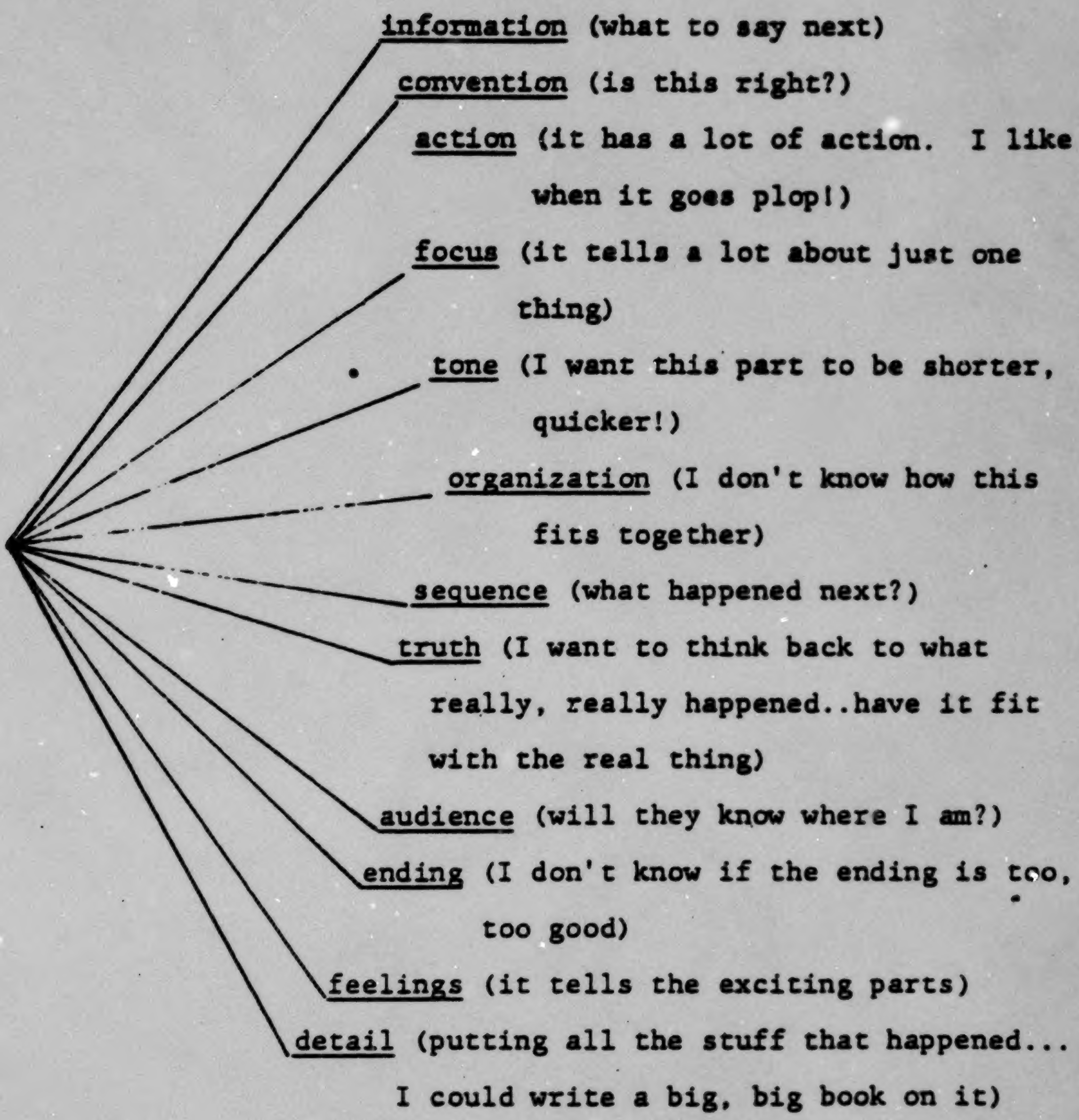
As she writes, one concern vies against another. She wanted to provide her audience with needed information while still making her story action-packed, she wanted to make her piece true-to-life while still maintaining her focus. As a result, she shuttles between focusing on the text and the subject, between attending to language and attending to information. The dimensions of her field of concern have gone from this:



information (what to say next)

convention (is this right?)

to this:



information (what to say next)

convention (is this right?)

action (it has a lot of action. I like when it goes plop!)

focus (it tells a lot about just one thing)

tone (I want this part to be shorter, quicker!)

organization (I don't know how this fits together)

sequence (what happened next?)

truth (I want to think back to what really, really happened..have it fit with the real thing)

audience (will they know where I am?)

ending (I don't know if the ending is too, too good)

feelings (it tells the exciting parts)

detail (putting all the stuff that happened... I could write a big, big book on it)

Susie's new concerns probably come from her classroom environment. Because she has real audiences, she anticipates future readers. Because she writes on true topics, she can recreate the events as she puts them on paper. Because she is learning that her friends like action and sound effects, Susie wants to include these in her story. Because she has seen classmates cutting and pasting their papers in order to put sections into the right order, Susie is aware sequence is something writers think about. A concern for what works in a piece of writing was in the air in Mrs. Howard's classroom, and it was no wonder Susie's writing was now shaped by conscious attention to many qualities of good writing.

The number of qualities of good writing Susie considered probably came from her classroom environment, but her ability to simultaneously weigh one concern against another may have related more to development than to instruction. I do not know, but I suspect no classroom environment could lead a 6 year-old to maintain such a wide field on concerns. Instead, first graders tend to consider qualities of good writing singly or serially (Newkirk, 1982). Also, usually (but now always) a 6 year-old's concepts of good writing will be different, for their attention tends to be more closely bound to the here-and-now, to the word-at-hand. Although they may write for an audience, often that audience does not extend beyond their classmates. Often they do not imagine a future time when their story will exist without them. When Mrs. Giacobbe urged 6 year-old Amy to add missing information into her story by asking Amy how her readers would know the information if it wasn't included in the text, Amy's response showed her inability to envision a distant and separate audience. "Simple," she said, "I'll invite them to my birthday party and tell them." Other first graders do add information into their texts so as to answer their readers' questions. First graders, like third graders, differ in their ability to write for a distant and separate audience.

Alex, another 6 year-old, showed a typically first grade focus on the present tense. When he picked up his pencil to write, I asked, "What will your story be about?" Alex seemed dumbfounded by the stupidity of my question. "How should I know, I haven't drawed it yet," he replied. Again, other first graders show a greater ability to plan ahead; there are many exceptions to my generalization that first graders tend to focus on the here-and-now. But on the whole, the nature of a first grader's concept of good writing tends to be quite different from those Susie showed in "The Big Fish," and certainly the extent to which first-graders can simultaneously vie one concern against another is different. Like both the executive function and internalization, the dimensions of a child's field-of-concerns probably relate to cognitive development, as well as to teaching and to experience with their craft.

## Chapter 8

## One Episode, and the Story It Tells Us

When I unbraid the threads of Susie's writing development and follow each one separately, I risk losing sight of the larger fabric. In doing so, I lose many of the advantages of the case-study approach. In this chapter, therefore, I do not analyze Susie's writing progress during the next portion of third grade; instead I show it. The chapter contains an episode of Susie's writing development, as it happened within the drama of classroom life. Interacting within the chapter, readers will see each aspect of writing which we have emphasized thus far:

1. ownership
2. pace and control of one's pace
3. conferencing
4. Susie's executive function and the role dialogue plays in it
5. Susie's field of concerns and the way she vies one concern against another
6. internalization
7. Mrs. Howard's role in each of these

* * * * * * *

New fallen snow made my trip from the University of New Hampshire to Atkinson School a slippery one, and so I arrived late on the morning of January 7th. The children were already gathered into their share meeting. Their eyes watched Susie, for it was the girl's turn to share. "The is my final draft of "Saturday Nights with My Father," Susie said, surprising me because I knew she'd only begun the piece when she returned from Christmas vacation two days before. "What had happened to the notion of revising until it's your best?" I wondered, but I did not have long to ponder the question, for Mrs. Howard was reminding the children that final drafts were to be celebrated. The room grew quiet and Susie began to read.

Her story began:

> I love Saturday nights when my father lays down with me.

Then she proceeded to tell about watching TV together and how they get hungry and her father heads for the kitchen:

> I know what he's going to make--his famous spaghetti with homemade sauce. Then when he takes a big plate and a little plate, I know I am going to have some too.

The story continued, describing every step of their Saturday night ritual.

When Susie finished reading, a scattering of children raised their hands. Because it was Susie's text which was being discussed, she was the leader of the meeting. She called on Tracey, "I like it, it's really good," Tracey said, then catching a glimpse of Mrs. Howard, she tried to be more specific, saying "I like it because you put your feelings down." Assent rippled through the group, and again Susie blushed. There were other compliments and each was specific: she told just about one thing, she had lots of details like about the plates, she'd put it in order.

Then Ian responded in a different way, asking, "What part did you like best?"

Ian's unusual contribution did not go unnoticed, for much of Mrs. Howard's teaching consisted of noticing what children did and helping them to see the signficance of it. A month earlier she'd called attention to a child who gave a specific rather than general compliment, and now Tracey and the others remembered to give specific feedback. On this January morning, Mrs. Howard called the class's attention to Ian's question and they talked about the significance of helping each other look back and evaluate their own work. A group was formed to later collect a list of questions which children might ask to help writers look back and reflect on their own texts. Meanwhile, Susie was thinking about Ian's question.

"I like the part about snuggling with my father," she said, and six more hands shot up; new interests, new comments, perhaps new questions.

Again Mrs. Howard intervened, for she wanted the children to follow through on each other's questions, to view a question as the beginning of a probe. She asked Ian if he could respond to Susie's answer, and so Ian asked, "Why is that your favorite part?"

Soon Susie was describing snuggling with her father in great detail, telling about piling pillows on her daddy's feet to keep them warm and how sometimes they wrap themselves in a puffy quilt. Sometimes her sister snuggles with them, too, which she said was the best of all, for then they get to go on their parents' king-sized bed.

The story was a touching one, told with such simplicity and warmth that the class as a whole responded, "You should write about that!" And so Susie decided her next piece would be "bumped off" from the previous one, and she would call it "Snuggling with My Father."

Because the next day was Thursday, the class did not have writing workshop. Instead the children worked in their now streamlined Language Arts Skills program. Only the few skills which had not been integrated into either the writing or the reading programs were still being taught in isolation. Although Thursday was not a day for writing, Susie told me she'd been thinking about her story.

Susie didn't know it, but she was not the only one who'd been thinking about her story. At lunch, teachers had heard Mrs. Howard's rendition of Susie's tale and the young girl and her father were fast winning their way into the hearts of everyone.

When children came into the classroom on Friday morning, their daily writing folders lay waiting on their desks. It was Greg's job to come in early from recess and to pass out the folders so that writing workshop could begin smoothly when the children reached their desks. Today, however, Mrs. Howard broke the precedent by asking the children to gather on the rug for a brief preliminary meeting. The children knew what was expected of them in these meeings; the rules by now were implicit:

1. Bring work-in-progress only if you want to share it.
2. Do not bring pencils to the meeting.
3. Sit in a circle, on your bottoms.
4. If you have papers with you, lay them on the floor in front of you.
5. Listen well.

At this particular meeting, Mrs. Howard asked the children in the circle to each tell what they intended to do that day. As usual, the children were at many different stages:

"I'm brainstorming for topics."

"I'm copying my final draft over into cursive."

"I have five leads on Waterslide and I need a conference to help me choose the best one."

"I'm just getting down information on bats. My story is going to be a report."

Because a number of children were choosing topics, Mrs. Howard suggested they stay on the rug for a meeting, and the other children dispersed. Susie, Birger, Greg, Diane and Amy--

the five children I was following the most closely--returned to their cluster of desks in the back of the room. For a few minutes, the room was filled with a hum of activity as 24 children sorted through their writing folders and chatted about their plans. Soon Birger and Amy went off to the rug for a conference, and the other youngsters in our cluster settled into their own work.

My chair was pulled close to Susie and I was curious. I'd been perplexed by her abbreviated process in "Saturday Nights with My Father." What would she show me today? Had "The Big Fish" been a fluke, an isolated event? Now as I sat with clipboard in hand, I wondered if I would see her executive function at work, organizing a variety of processes. Would I see her shuttling back and forth among a wide field of concerns? The process of research, like the process of reading a good book, had caught hold of me and I couldn't wait to read the next line.

Susie wrote #1 on her blank sheet of yellow paper. She held her pencil beside the number and looked up. She glanced around the room, then her eyes flickered back towards the paper, then again around the room. At first I didn't know it, but she was writing leads.

"I thought about some," Susie said a moment later, "but they are not right. I'm trying to think how it really happens: how does he get on the couch and how do I get there?" Professional writers have said that the hardest thing about writing fiction is getting a person from here to there--I was surprised to see a 9 year-old struggling with the same problem. "Usually I'm in the den and then he lugs wood for a while," she said to no one in particular. "Then he takes a shower and we wait, and when the shower is over, he comes out and stretches and then lies down..." Her voice trailed off as momentum shifted from mouth to hand and she was writing:

> 1. Bang! There goes the hamper. He must be almost done with his shower. I can't wait. 'Jill, make room, Dad's coming.'
>
> 'No, I will when he gets here.'
>
> 'Well, here he comes, Hi, Daddy!' My father motions with his arm to push down, but I am already.

Susie stopped, skipped a line and wrote #2. Had she progressed immediately into her second lead, I suspect it would have been a continuation of the first. The product would have reflected the process. Instead, Susie distanced from her text by showing it to Diane. They read the lead together, and Susie asked, "Do you have any idea how I could start my next one? I gotta think of a new one." But without saying a word, Diane had already played her part. Susie did not even wait for a response. She just reread her lead and started thinking of how she could change it into a better beginning. "I might leave out the first part of that lead and start it, "I can't wait, Jill, make room." A second lead adapted from the first, was quickly written and now Susie reread both and said,

> I thought the first was good, but I think this one is even better and now I'm going to keep on, and I may take parts from each one. But after my Dad takes a shower, my Mother does, and she wears a flowered robe. But I don't think that's important to my story.

The allotted 45 minutes for writing had passed, and Susie knew it was almost time for share meeting. She wrote her third lead quickly, adapting it from the first one. The noise level in the room picked up as meeting time drew near. Papers were refiled into folders, conferences were brought to a speedy close, and at 12 o'clock the 24 children were in place, seated cross-legged in a circle. Then came the much enjoyed ritual of watching Mrs. Howard hold her hip, sigh, and climb onto the floor with the children. In all her years of teaching this was the first time the floor had been considered usable space and it came more naturally to the children and me than to her.

Twenty-four children waited. Although perhaps a third had papers on the floor in front of them signifying they wanted to share, only four or five would be called upon today for each piece deserved some response and the meetings never exceeded 20 minutes. Susie was the third to share. As was the custom, she began by saying where she was in the writing process and what kind of help she needed. "I've just written three leads," she said, "and I want to know which sounds best to you."

1. Bang! There goes the hamper. He must be almost done with his shower. I can't wait! 'Jill, make room, Daddy's coming out!'...

2. I can't wait. 'Jill, make room, Dad is coming out of the shower.' 'Noooo, Susan Sible, I will when he comes out!'

Well, here he comes, hi Daddy!'

3. 'I can't wait,' I said, jumping on the couch. 'Jill, make room, Daddy's coming out of the shower'...

Susie's classmates liked her third lead, but Susie didn't. The next writing workshop began with Susie writing a fourth lead. When she finished it, she sought feedback from Wendy, one of the best writers in the room. Wendy listened to the new lead:

4. My father came in from hauling wood. 'Daddy,' I asked, 'will you lay down with Jill and me?'

'After I fill the wood stove up and take a shower...'

"Can't you make it longer, just putting it all down?" Wendy asked. When Susie looked quizzical, Wendy tried to be more specific. "You could add sentences betwen each sentence. Like in the lead, 'My father came in from hauling wood,' you could add, 'He had sawdust in his hair,' between the two sentences. You could put in another sentence and it would give more feelings to the story."

I was stunned by Wendy's insight, for she was right. Susie rarely "built up" her pieces with those "sentences in between." Each line of Susie's pieces furthered her sequence of action--she wrote with vertical rather than horizontal sentences, and for now, this quality sometimes resulted in a scantiness in Susie's stories.

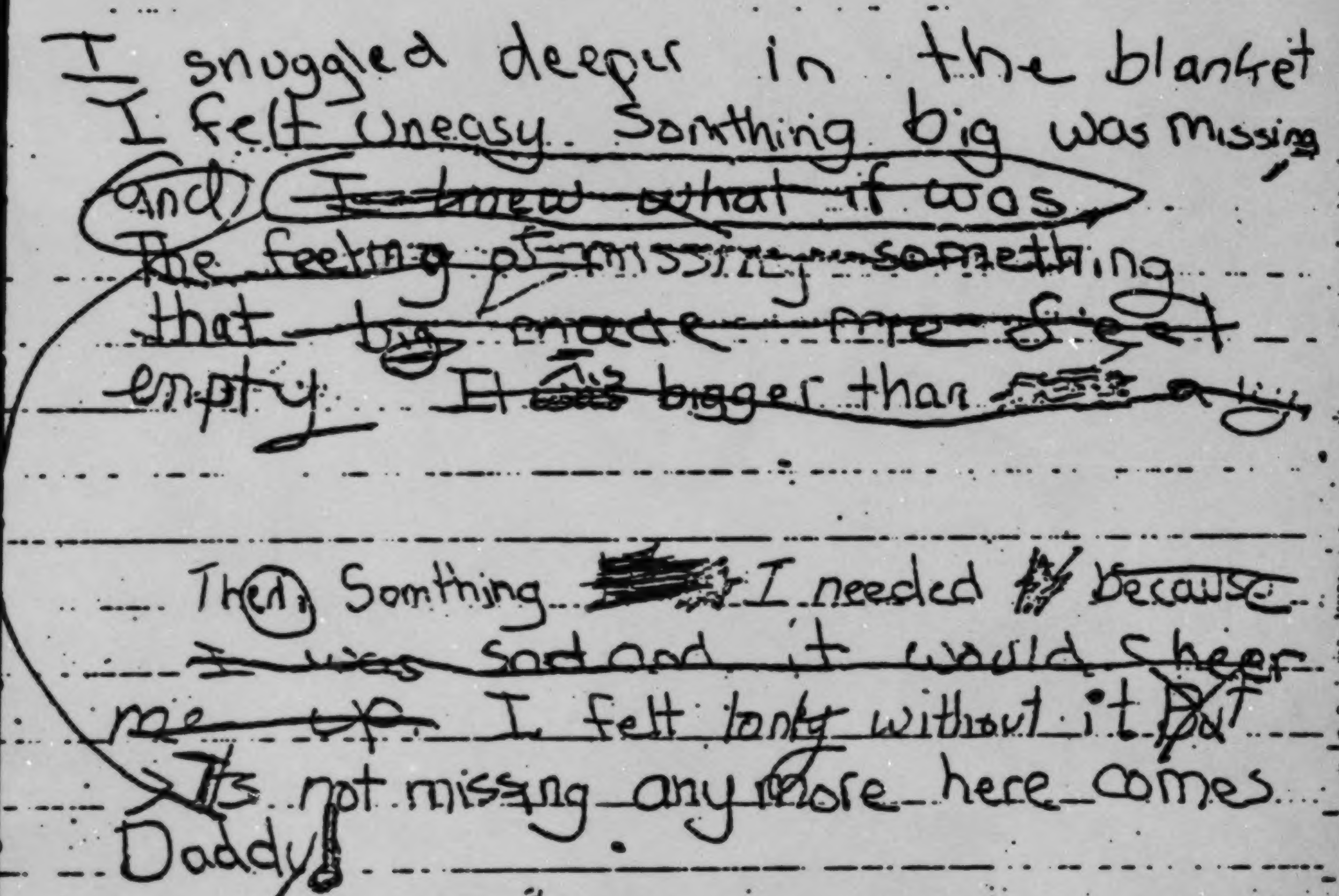
But Susie just shrugged and said she guessed she'd have to do it her own way. Rather than repairing her fourth lead, she started over again. She was writing on a new sheet of paper which may have helped her approach the subject from a new tact. This lead had a different tone:

> I snuggled deeper in the blanket. I felt uneasy. Something big was missing and I knew what it was. It's Daddy, I think, and he's in the shower. I hear the water click off. 'Whhoopie! He's almost done and then he can lie down...'

Without talking to anyone, Susie reread the lead and drew slashes through several parts, then carved out the one section which she liked. She wrote it on another bit of paper.

> I snuggled deeper in the blanket. Something big was missing and I knew what it was.

"Now, what I have to figure out is how, with the same feeling, can I bring my father to the sofa," Susie said. She wrote numbers 1 through 3 at the bottom of her page, as if she were about to list possible leads, but instead she listed possible ways to manuever her father onto the couch. None of them "fit," and so Susie decided that the final line in her original section didn't connect with anything. She crossed it out, with one cross-out leading to another. Soon Susie was shaping her words as if they were clay.



I snuggled deeper in the blanket
I felt Uneasy. Somthing big was missing
and ~~I knew what it was~~
~~The feeling of missing something~~
that ~~big made me feel~~
~~empty.~~ ~~It was~~ is ~~bigger than~~ [illegible] ~~a~~

Then Somthing [illegible] I needed ~~Because~~
~~I was sad and it would cheer~~
~~me up.~~ I felt lonly without it ~~But~~
~~It's~~ not missing any more here comes
Daddy!

1. Than and

① Its my father X
② I ~~must ba daddy~~ I think X X
③ I look around the room to make sure nothing else is missing and the only thing thast missing is daddy!

Susie was getting closer now and she knew it. She worked silently, as if afraid to break the spell. Selecting what was good from her draft, Susie recopied it and again reshaped and refined her words. Finally, she successfully maneuvered her father to the sofa, and the section was complete. She read it aloud, proud of her efforts:

I snuggle deeper in the blanket. I feel uneasy. Something big is missing. Then, Daddy comes in and lays down with me. He makes a pocket with his legs. I crawl in.

I feel happy I do not have a lonely feelina anymore.

With black ink and an italic pen, Susie copied "Snuggling with My Father" for a final time, then pasted the little piece onto page seven of a slim, homemade book which held her finished work. Then the girl took a huge stack of papers from her Daily Writing Folder and began to sort and label the rough drafts which comprised the real history of "Snuggling with My Father." She tucked the pile of rough drafts into an already bulging Cumulative Writing Folder, then whispered to her friend, "Hey, Di, look how fat this folder is getting." Giggling, the two girls pretended the folder was too heavy to lift from the table. "All that work," Susie said happily, "for seven tiny pages!"

"Same with my writing," Diane said. "Like at home--we have to get about a million buckets of sap before we get the tiniest bit of maple syrup."

But to Mrs. Howard, the final pieces sometimes didn't seem like syrup, and then, without jesting she would groan, "All that work--for this." Then I would remind Mrs. Howard she wasn't teaching pieces of writing, but young writers. No matter what the final pieces were like, none of the drafts, none of the experiments, were a waste, for each left their mark on the writer, if not always on the writing.

I didn't necessarily believe what I was saying, but I figured it would cheer her up. Only now, as I pore over the data, does it occur to me that I was right.

Whereas much of Susie's revision during the first half of third grade "came to get my lead," as she put it, by the time she finished her snuggling story, Susie seemed to have internalized the process of considering alternative beginnings. Instead of following the elaborate procedure of listing leads, Susie just jotted down a word or two, thought, looked around the room, thought some more, and then began her story. What was once revision had now become pre-vision. What was once an elaborate, long process, now happened in the jotting down of a word or two, or in a moment's pause.

Each time Susie wrestled with a writing dilemma, it was as if she added a new layer onto what she could bring to later writing episodes. She was growing like an onion--deeper, with more internal layers.

It's easy to misread the importance of this, as I did. I remember watching Susie internalize revision behaviors, and thinking, "This will save her time, but things won't be fundamentally different." But abstract thinking is fundamentally different from physical activity, as I soon began to realize.

## Chapter 9.

## Susie Is Gifted--

## Gifted with the Human Potential to Learn

I wonder if ever a school had more Valentine letters sent and received than Atkinson Elementary School did that year. The writing bug had spread through contagion from child to child, from grade to grade, until even the teachers were writing. "I think we saw how much fun the kids were having and started getting jealous," one teacher told me.

A writing support group had formed with a cluster of teachers meeting twice a month to share their writing, and on Tuesday mornings eight of us began holding breakfast meetings to exchange ideas on teaching writing. I did a lot of listening at those meetings--and so did both Mrs. Howard and Susie's fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Currier. Afterwards, Mrs. Howard would come to me and say, "You know--that idea of Janet's seemed really good--do you think I should try it?" Invariably I'd say yes, and soon she stopped asking.

And so for me and for the third graders in room 209, those winter mornings began to hold little nutshells of surprises. At the start of a writing workshop--or perhaps midway into it--Mrs. Howard would often say to the children, "Would you all come to meeting," and then, as she put it, she'd have a mini-lesson to add something new to the classroom pot. "It would have been impossible for those lessons to meet each child's needs," she told me in retrospect, "but because they were only five minutes long, I didn't worry. I knew they'd click into place for some kids, and for others they'd just be exposure."

In one meeting, she asked children to compile a list of Do's and Don'ts for selecting a good topic. Soon this list was hanging on their bulletin board.

| Do | Don't |
|---|---|
| Write about something you you care about. | Don't write about things that are boring to you. |
| Start off with action, with the here-and-now. | Don't write about something you haven't done yet. |
| Choose just one aspect or part of your topic. | Don't keep going if it gets worse and worse. |
|  | Don't pick a topic that's too big for you to be detailed. |

In another meeting, Mrs. Howard suggested each child read aloud the lead paragraph in their reading book. Then the children discussed the way some leads involved action and dialogue, and others were flashbacks:

> Walking back to camp through the swamp, Sam wondered whether to tell his father what he had seen.
>
> 'I know one thing,' he said to himself, 'I'm going back to that little pond again tomorrow.'

The Trumpet of the Swan by E.B. White

> Sometimes at night when the rain is beating against the windows of my room, I think about that summer on the farm. It has been five years, but when I close my eyes I am once again by the creek watching the black fox come leaping over the green, green grass.
>
> The Midnight Fox by Betsy Byars

But more often Mrs. Howard's mini-lessons focused not on the familiar concepts of leads, focus and telling detail, but on concepts she and the other teachers were gleaning from their discussions and from reading books such as Murray's A Writer Teaches Writing (1968). In several lessons, for example, she asked children to find places in their writing where they'd told the reader something, and she helped the writers show rather than tell. Murray describes the concept of show not tell this way:

> You may tell us 'It was hot.' Or you may show us by writing, 'My shirt stuck to my back. Sweat ran into my glasses.' In the first sentence, we had to take your word for the heat. In the other two sentences, we were there. We too have the same stickings and sweatings. Showing makes it possible for the reader to identify with the writer. (p. 228)

In February and early March, Susie's responses to those meetings puzzled me. She'd listen attentively, or so it seemed, but when she returned to her work, none of the new concepts seemed to stay with her. In retrospect, I think I understand. It was as if Susie was saying, "My head is full; I can't take in new things until I can manage what I've got."

When baby rats are given a smorgasbord of foods, they instinctively eat a balanced diet. I soon realized Susie was being no less wise. As soon as she could, she began to take in the new notions--slowly, one at a time, reminding me of recipes which say, "Add flour slowly, stirring all the while." And so the next months of Susie's writing development can be described as a time for mastery, and as we see in the next chapter, for a gradual movement towards new concepts of good writing and towards new revision strategies.

Mastery didn't come in the shape one might expect. Susie did not grow more articulate, more in control of her pieces, more logical. Instead, the opposite happened. She grew less articulate about what she was doing and why, and her writing became less a matter of deliberate control. Although I didn't realize it at the time, Susie was growing towards a mastery which wasn't the school kind of mastery at all, but instead the mastery of a craftsperson.

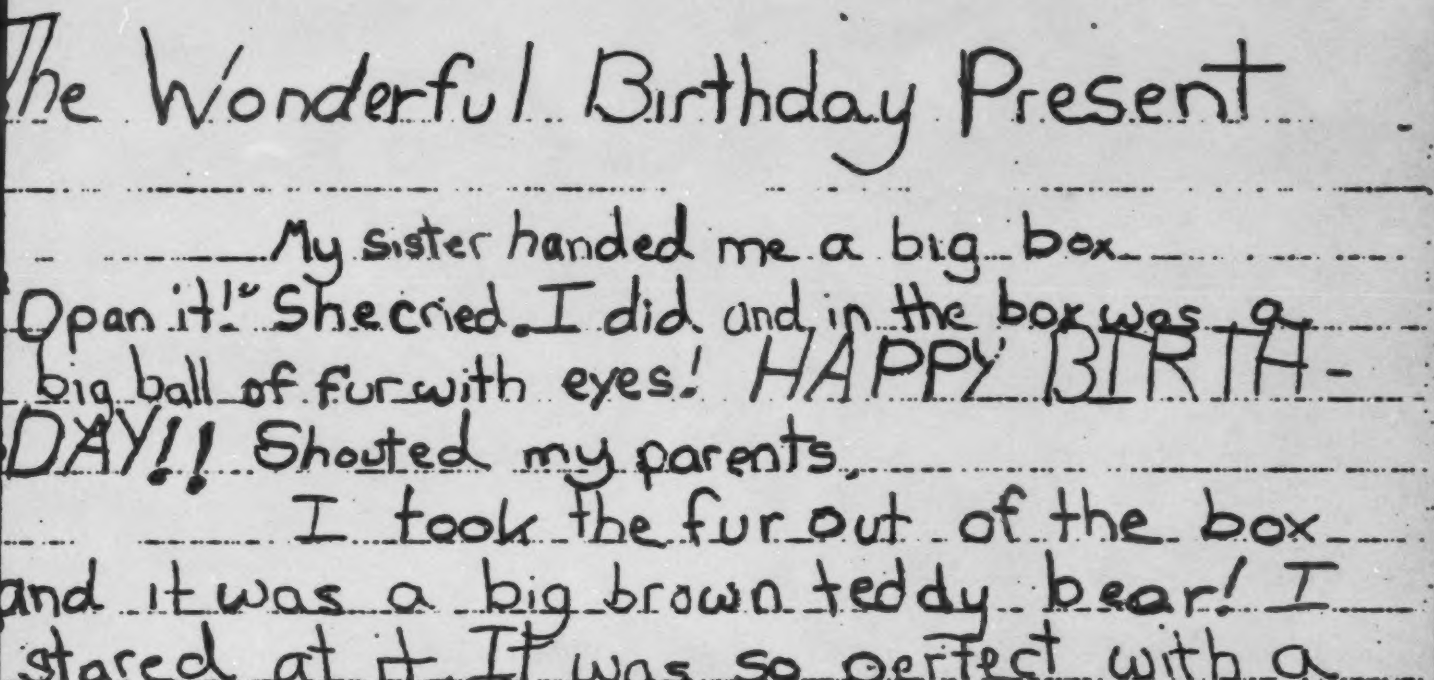
The first signs I saw of this change came in a spring-like morning in early March. I sat with clipboard in hand waiting for Susie to begin a story about the teddy bear she'd been given when she was "going on eight." I expected Susie to list--or at least, to consider--possible leads. I'd grown accustomed to her step-by-step progression through the writing craft.

But instead of exerting her usual systematic control over the creation of a story, Susie surprised me by saying, "I'll write this draft and it will tell me where to start it."

The draft would tell her where to begin! I knew instantly what Susie meant; I felt the shock of hearing my own inarticulated experience put into words, and thought of Bruner's similar statement, for in describing the conditions of creativity, he speaks about the freedom to be dominated by one's subject (1979):

> You begin to write a poem. Before long it, the poem, begins to develop metrical, stanzaic, symbolic requirements. You, as the writer of the poem, are serving it--or so it seems...It is at this point that we get our creative second wind, at the point when the object takes over. (p. 25)

This time after Susie wrote about the teddy bear, she described her writing by saying, "I was writing like wildfire, just going after whatever came to me." She still made revisions, but this time the additions and deletions were not the focus of Susie's attention. They were, instead, a tool. Whereas once Susie had seen her writing process in terms of a-linear system of activities which she imposed onto herself, now her writing process had loosened its bondage to a physical set of activities and she was able to "write like wildfire," going after whatever came to her. Her writing process was no longer the goal in and of itself. It had become more amorphous, more playful, more intuitive. The resulting story was perhaps the most coherent, unified piece of writing she'd written that year:

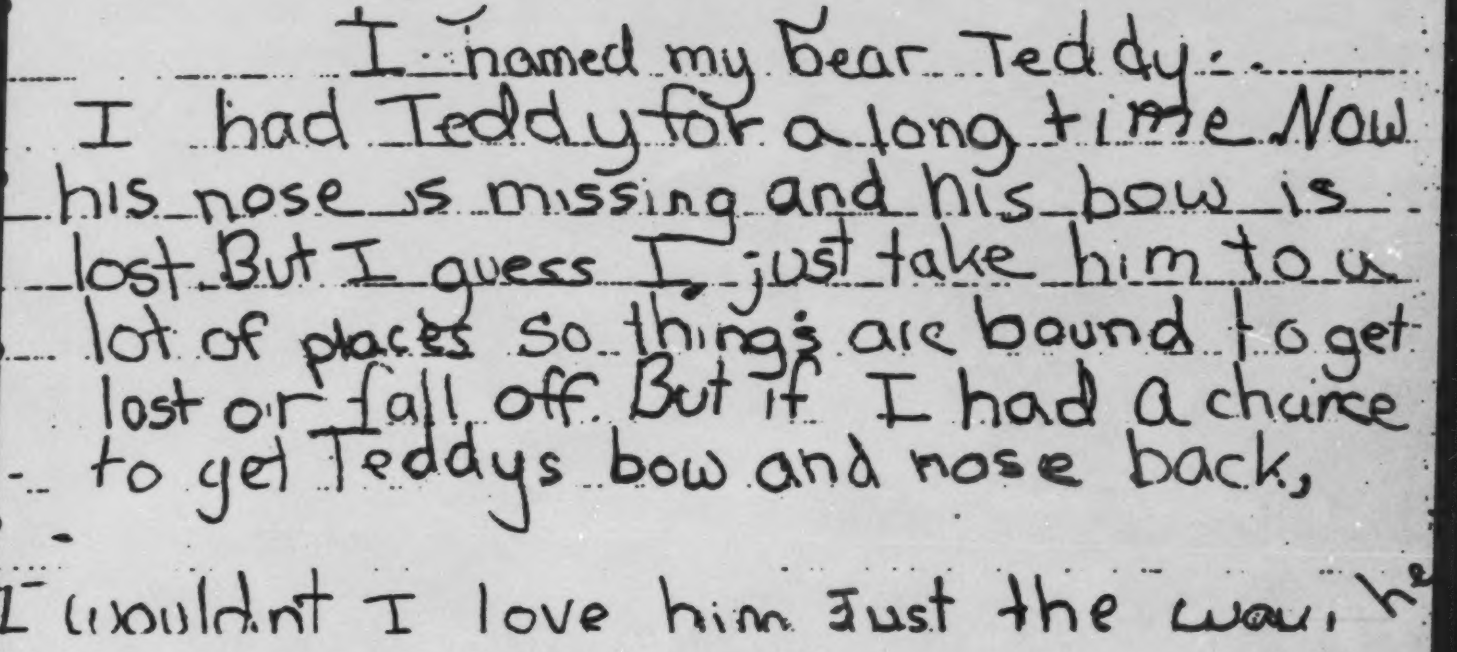


The Wonderful Birthday Present

My sister handed me a big box "Opan it!" She cried. I did and in the box was a big ball of fur with eyes! HAPPY BIRTH-DAY!! Shouted my parents.

I took the fur out of the box and it was a big brown teddy bear! I stared at it. It was so perfect with a big yellow bow around its neck. It had big brow eyes. "Do you like it?" Jill asked "I love it thank you."

That night I slept with the bear. Its soft fur felt warm and cozy. I never knew how nice it could be to sleep with. Before I would have felt uncomfortable. But I can't imagine not sleeping with my bear now.

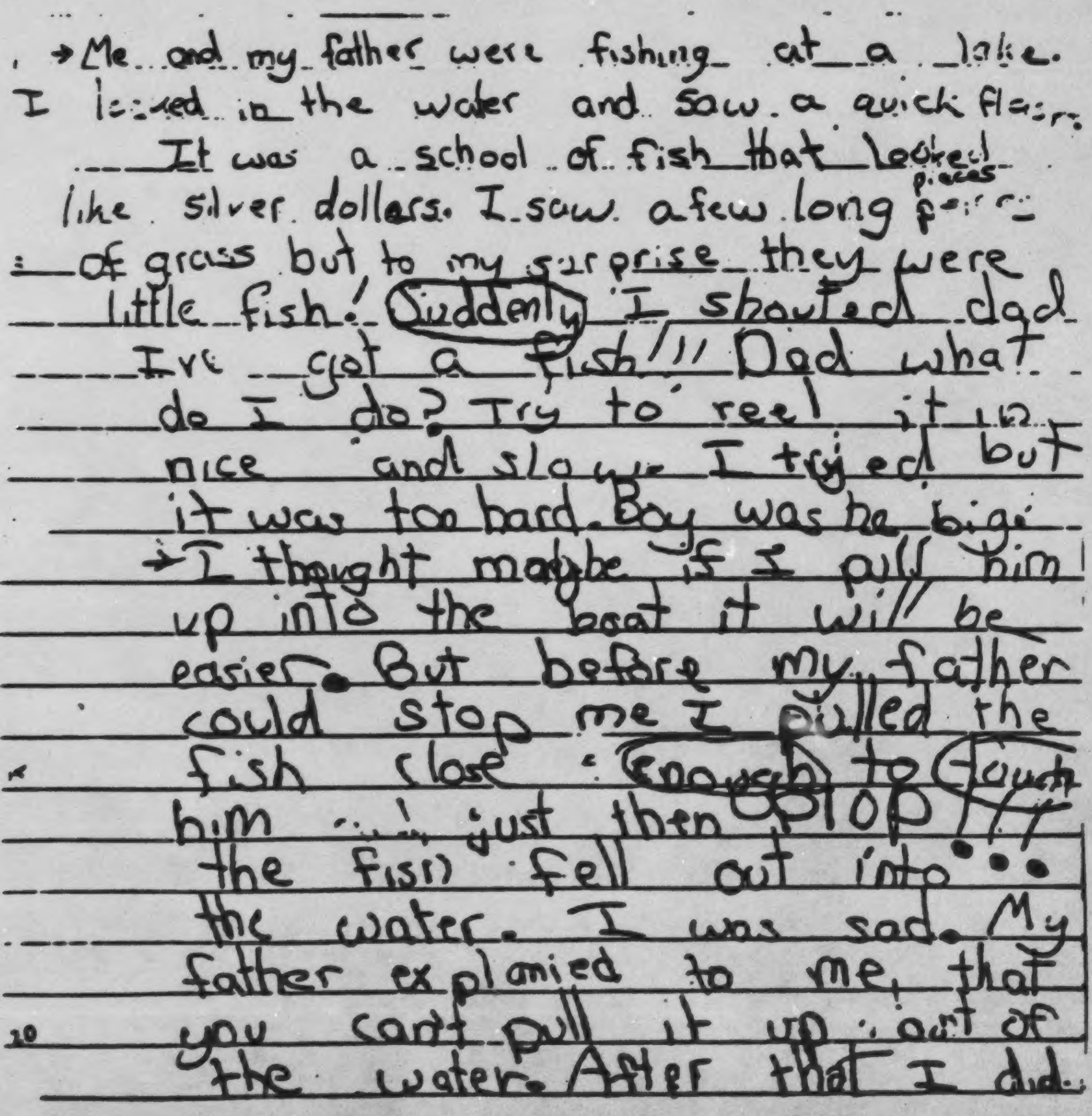


I named my bear Teddy.
I had Teddy for a long time Now
his nose is missing and his bow is
lost. But I guess I just take him to a
lot of places so things are bound to get
lost or fall off. But if I had a chance
to get Teddys bow and nose back,

I wouldnt I love him Just the way he

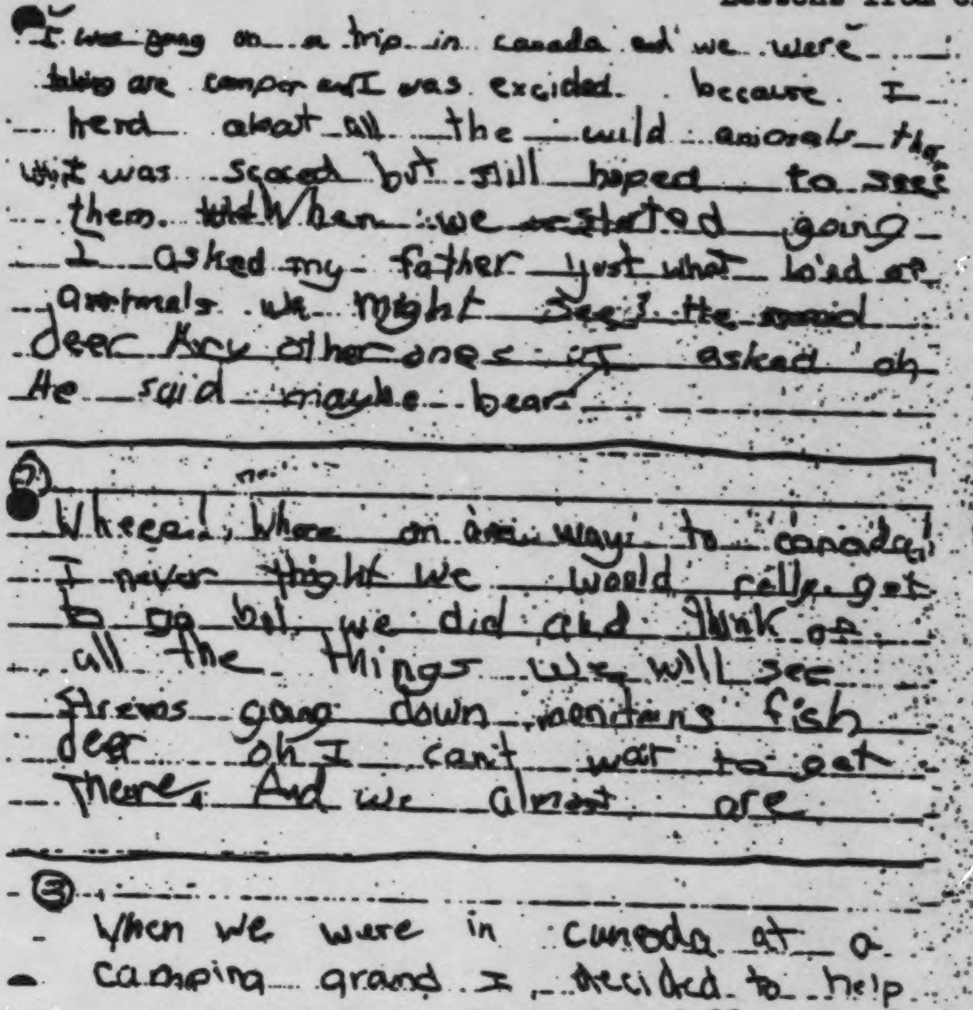
It's easy to lean back in the rocking chair and say, "Susie had internalized much of our writing process, and this internalization meant she could focus better on her subject." Whereas this is true, the label of internalization seems inadequate, for it doesn't convey the freedom and power Susie has gained. Besides, internalization suggests a single phenomenon, whereas actually as Susie internalized what had once been a concrete, systematic process, changes happened on many different levels.

On the one level was the fact that Susie's drafts looked very different. In early third grade, her pages had reflected a deliberate and even-keeled process. And no wonder, for every turn and step of her revision had been grounded in physical acts. Although Susie could vary the pace of those actions somewhat, her revisions had been held back by the fact that they were bound to activities. In early third grade, Susie couldn't flash forward in her mind's eye to consider implications of a new word, or an altered phrase. Her thinking couldn't zoom ahead to see where a tact might lead. Because her attention was riveted onto the tip of her pencil, Susie's pages in third grade tended to reflect a deliberated and even-keeled kind of revision as in these examples of Susie's third grade work:



→Me and my father were fishing at a lake.
I looked in the water and saw a quick flash.
It was a school of fish that looked
like silver dollars. I saw a few long pieces
of grass but to my surprise they were
little fish! Suddenly I shouted dad
I've got a fish!!! Dad what
do I do? Try to reel it in
nice and slow. I tried but
it was too hard. Boy was he big!
→I thought maybe if I pull him
up into the boat it will be
easier. But before my father
could stop me I pulled the
fish close enough to touch
him ... just then STOP!!!
the fish fell out into
the water. I was sad. My
father explanied to me, that
you can't pull it up out of
the water. After that I did.

219



I was going on a trip in canada and we were
taking are camper and I was excided because I
herd about all the wild animals that
wit was scared but still hoped to see
them. ~~wh~~ When we started going
I asked my father just what kind of
animals we might see? He said
deer Any other ones? I asked oh
He said maybe bear

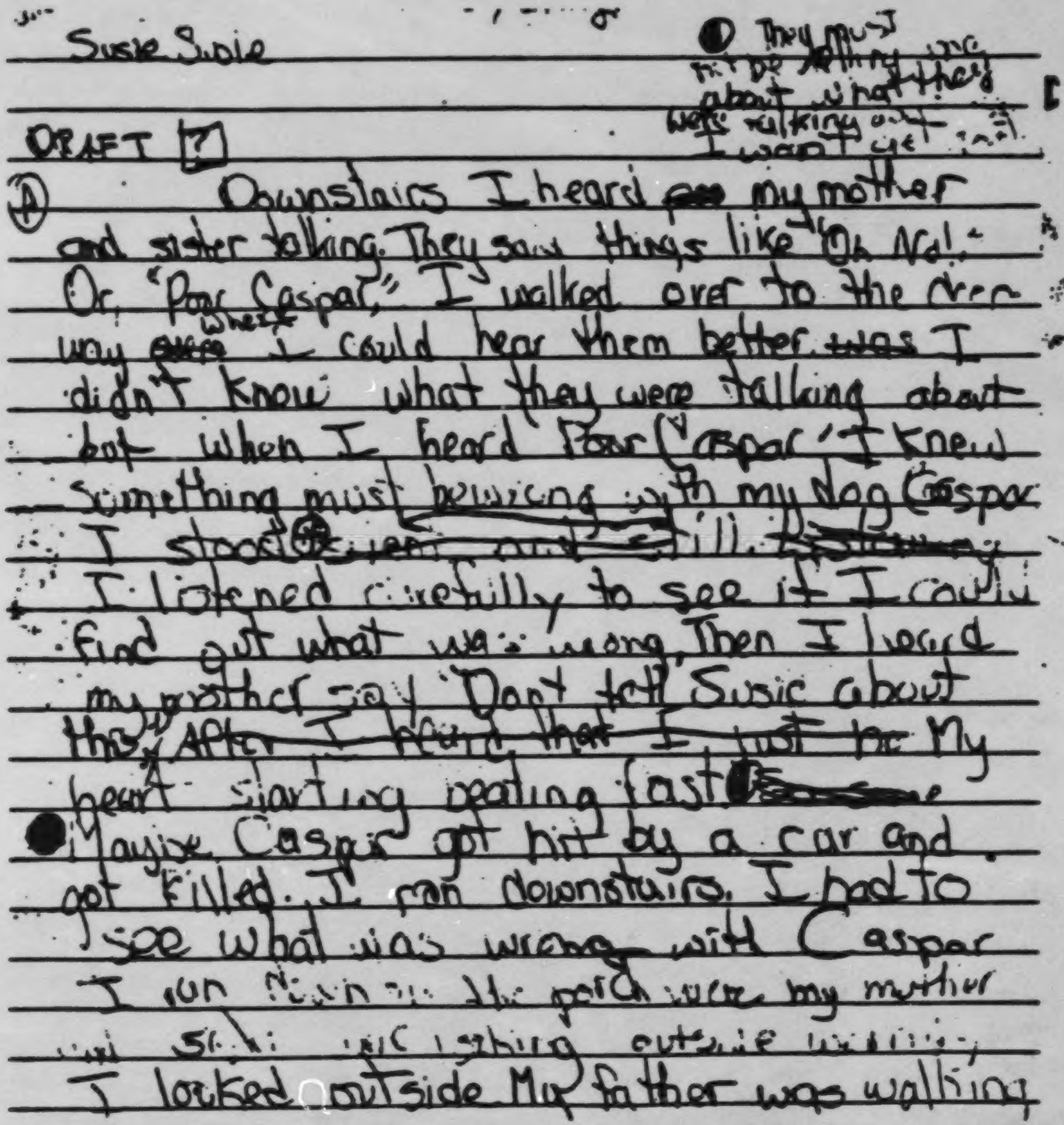
2

Wheee!, Where on are way to canada!
I never thought we would relly get
to go but we did and think of
all the things we will see
streams going down mountains fish
deer oh I can't wait to get
there. And we almost are

3

When we were in cunada at a
camping grand I decided to help

By early fourth grade, things were different. Susie was 9½ years old and far more experienced as a writer. When revising, she needed only to touch base with concrete activities and strategies. It was typical for her to list several numbers and then to simply point to each number as she weighed alternatives in her mind. Many times I'd watch her put a single word onto the paper, then look up, as if the word of print had set into motion a chain of thinking. Often she'd reread a draft, underline sections which she wanted to "spread out with more detail," and then proceed to write an expanded draft. Because her revision was becoming more abstract, her pace could become more varied. Sometimes her drafts mirrored an easy, loping process like this:



Susie Suoie

① They must be ~~talking~~ about what they were talking but I wasn't yet [illegible]

DRAFT [?]

Ⓐ Downstairs I heard ~~[illegible]~~ my mother
and sister talking. They saw things like "Oh No!"
Or, "Poor Caspar," I walked over to the door
way ~~ever~~ where I could hear them better. ~~was~~ I
didn't know what they were talking about
but when I heard "Poor Caspar" I knew
something must be wrong with my dog Caspar
I stood ~~even and~~ still. ~~[illegible]~~
I listened carefully to see if I could
find out what was wrong. Then I heard
my mother say "Don't tell Susie about
this." ~~After I heard that I just~~ ~~[illegible]~~ My
heart starting beating fast ~~[illegible]~~
Maybe Caspar got hit by a car and
got killed. I ran downstairs. I had to
see what was wrong with Caspar
I ran [illegible] the porch were my mother
and sister [illegible] outside [illegible]
I looked outside My father was walking

Others, like these, reflected tautness, conflict and thinking which sped ahead, then turned back on itself:

~~I started walking~~ [illegible] to the
~~airport from the~~ [illegible] I had to
go threw A ~~tunnel~~ ~~[illegible]~~ ~~I squeezed~~
~~my mothers hand.~~ ~~[illegible]~~ I sq
my mothers hand ~~I walked~~
I couldn't wait to see my grandparents
~~faster~~ We were almost in the
~~and I saw my grandparents~~
~~[illegible] running~~ ~~I let go~~
~~my mother's hand and~~ ~~of my ha.~~
~~[illegible]~~ ~~Pressure~~
~~[illegible]~~ A long ~~passage~~ [illegible]
~~the Airport~~ Before we [illegible]

~~I started crying again~~
My mother told me ~~to sit down~~
~~and rest then she looked at my~~
head to see if I was bleeding I was O.K. ~~I am~~
~~am glad there was a~~
~~cushion were my head hit~~

Draft 2

~~Plop!!! I opened my~~
~~eyes and looked around. What~~
~~happened. My head really hurt~~
~~I started crying. My mother~~
~~walked over and asked if I~~
~~was O.K. I guess I said.~~

~~I~~ ~~I was shocked of~~
~~the~~ My father came back
~~I~~ ~~[illegible]~~
I aced all over. ~~Next time~~
~~I would~~ I will never
~~sleep on that~~ top I don't think
I'll ever sleep on the top bunk again.

In the sequence and diversity of Susie's drafts, as on an EKG chart, one could read tracings of her thinking.

Other changes were also becoming evident. It's significant that in early third grade each of Susie's sentences had been written out in full and each tact followed to its logical conclusion. Leads had not trailed off, drafts had rarely been discarded mid-stream, and sentences had been written out before they were evaluated and possibly discarded. A year later, in early fourth grade, things were different. Susie's drafts often contained scraps and pieces of ideas juxtaposed against each other. For example, in the story about a moped ride with her father, Susie wrote the letters I fe, then crossed them out and wrote we, then crossed it out. When Susie finished the piece, I asked her about the cross-outs. Susie explained:

> 'When I put down "I fe," I was wondering if I should do a little more about how I felt, or should I put more about tightening my grip and speeding down the hill. Then when I put we, I was thinking whether I should make us approach the house or not.
>
> 'How do you decide?' I asked.
>
> 'I think how it would sound. Either I put it down or I just think it, and if it doesn't sound right, I think of a different way.'

How quickly things had changed! Only months earlier, I'd noticed Susie's attention was riveted onto the moving tip of her pencil, and her drafts consisted of a methodic, linear sequence of activity. Now five letters of print, crossed out, represented a while chain of thought, a dialectic of free association and critical thinking. By early fourth grade, when Susie worked with print, she worked with potential print. Her attention was continually looping ahead, then pulling back, creating an interaction of forces and time-frames. There was no longer a separation between writing and revision. As Susie drafted, she also revised. The two happened simultaneously. Drafts had become anticipatory of more drafts. No longer did Susie view her revisions as once-and-for-all corrections.

What this means is that Susie's thinking had gradually been freed from a reliance on the word at hand, and also from the activity at hand. She not only anticipated the ends of sentences begun, the conclusions of tacts started on...she also anticipated her own writing processes. Now her writing involved not only present-tense concerns, but also the future tense and the past tense. She could zoom ahead in her mind's eye, and she could turn backwards. This new time frame made profound differences in Susie's writing. Whereas in third grade revision tended to be a way to correct errors, by early fourth grade it had become a way to experiment. Whereas in third grade revision usually involved a backwards movement to correct or replace something "wrong," by early fourth grade revision involved a new sense of possibility, of exploration.

Notice the differences between Susie's comments about her writing in third grade and in fourth grade. The comments illustrate well the new playfulness which had entered Susie's revisions, the new willingness to loosen control and to follow wherever her craft and her subject led her.

| Early Third Grade | Fourth Grade |
|---|---|
| I did this wrong, the whole line. -"Lin Su Story," September, third grade. | I like this draft, but I might be able to do it better; I'll see. -"Falling out of the Bunk, September, fourth grade. |
| Shouldn't I have put this part about the pop-balls up ahead where I write about playing baseball with my sister? -"Batting Is Fun," October, third grade. | I'll try it out and read it over, see what it says. -"Falling out of the Bunk," September, fourth grade. |
| I don't think I should have the word 'back' two times in a sentence. -"Surprise in Canada," October, third grade. | I'm going to work around in here, writing and changing. -"Flying in a Jet," October, fourth grade. |
| I don't like this lead because you wouldn't even know | I'm just going to try another draft, or another |

I was talking to my dog. -"Dog's Pill," November, third grade.

How will they know I'm fishing...I better put it in. And I want to make this section shorter, it should be quicker. -"The Big Fish," November, third grade.

I don't know if the ending is too, too good or not. It might be boring. -"The Big Fish," November, third grade.

part of the story, or start it differently. -"Around the Campfire," January, fourth grade.

I can't think of anything to fix up in the draft so I'll put it away and write a whole new draft and see. When I write the new one, I might find out there are parts I don't like from this one. Even without thinking about it, I leave them out. -"Quiet and Peaceful," April, fourth grade.

What I want to do next is to add detail...I'll take the details from these drafts and fit them together. No, no, I'll just work on a draft 7 and make it fresh. If

> it turns out, I'll stay on it. Otherwise, I'll go back and take from the others. -"A Wonderful Walk," April, fourth grade.

Whereas in early third grade, when I asked Susie if she liked to revise her answer had been, "Yes, if there's a good reason. Like it's not neat or if you see spelling mistakes or you have the parts mixed up," in fourth grade her answers were quite different.

> Yes, you can mess it up, you can do anything you want to do.
>
> Usually I put down a sentence that isn't the one I like. It isn't even in the piece. I just put it down and I can go right through it.
>
> After I write so many drafts, I read them over and take parts. There is a special feeling about them.
>
> Susie: (in a conversation with Diane) One thing I learned about writing. It is small, but important, I realized I could have a pencil with no eraser and write.
>
> Diane: Yeah. Usually in school work, it has to be perfect, like in math, if we do a mistake, we have to erase it.

Susie: A big difference is, you can do anything you want in writing.

Because Susie by fourth grade anticipated learning through writing, she wrote with a new tentativeness, like an artist at a sketch pad. When she finished a piece, even her evaluations were tentative. "I don't know if I like it; I gotta go and see," she said and, "It might be good; I'm not sure."

Another telling sign of Susie's new tentativeness was the fact that, for the first time, she wrote titles after the piece was done rather than before she'd started it. I asked her why and Susie answered, "How could I write my title first--I don't know what the story will turn out like, not till I write it."

The tentativeness meant a whole new crop of revision codes. Susie invented "light cross outs." These tiny pencil lines meant, "This might have to come out; I'm not sure." And instead of using scissors to cut her stories into separate pieces, Susie began to use dark dividing lines at the end of a section. "I make believe these are scissor cuts," she said. "I can just erase the lines if I decide it's all one story--it's easier than pasting the pieces back together."

The new flexibility to the time and space dimensions of Susie's writing process meant a significant step forward had been taken. No longer did Susie view each draft, at the moment of conception, as the one-and-only version of a story. No longer did each draft replace the one before it. For the first time, Susie was able to move between several alternatives, interacting with her options so as to create new possibilities.

And so, by fourth grade, we have new words to describe Susie's writing process: tentative, anticipatory, flexible, interactive, responsive. Onto this list I want to add one more word: embodied.

Whereas in early third grade, Susie's writing seemed to be a product of her mind, now it was as if Susie's wisdom had left the realm of her mind and moved into her hands, her eyes and her ears. She would often preface her revisions with, "This part sounds like something's wrong," or "These don't fit together," or "My biggest problem is how to tell people what they need to know and still have it sound right." Whereas before judgments had been logical and articulate, now it was as if, in her hands, she could feel the shape of her piece, and in her ears, she could listen for connection and flow and pace.

Something new had happened: her sense of what worked in a piece of writing had moved from the domain of conscious thinking to that of felt-sense.

Visitors to the classroom would watch Susie writing and say she had a magic touch. They would marvel that she could pick up a pencil and with hardly a false start, write pieces which began like these:

- I peeked into the tunnel. Cool air struck my face.

> I stepped in, and the cool air was all around me. "Wow," I said softly. My voice echoed.
>
> I stopped and rubbed my sore legs, I squished my toes into the small puddles that were in my sneakers, and looked down from the mountain. I felt good--like I had really accomplished something by climbing that mountain.

"Susie is gifted," the visitors said, and I agreed. Gifted with the courage and the skills to experiment with print. Gifted with the human potential to learn through trial and error.

For a 9 year-old child, Susie's writing ability was quite remarkable. Yet there was nothing remarkable about her growth as a writer. Her skills had not appeared full-blown out of nowhere. Instead, they had developed step-by-step, the way all learning happens. Susie's magic touch was not the result of a miracle, but of experience and good teaching. She was not born with a talent for writing. She'd developed that talent through working in her craft. She'd gained a skill through the process of doing her best and then making her best better.

To me, it wasn't surprising that by fourth grade Susie could easily produce good leads, focus her story, and use telling details. These were things she'd worked on. There were many aspects of writing in which Susie had not yet worked, and in these areas, she was still self-conscious, deliberated, and concrete. And no wonder. In these areas, she was still just learning.

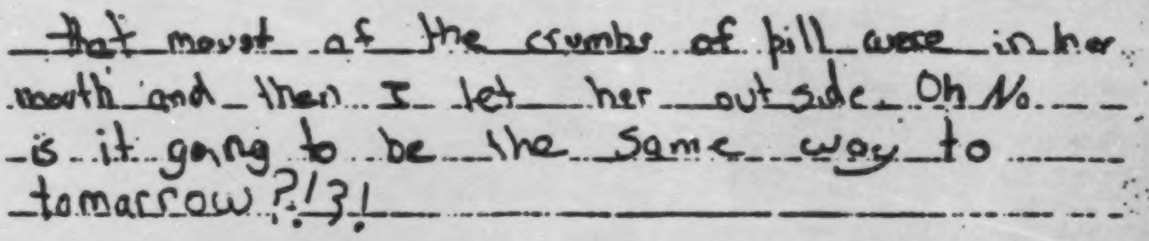
## Chapter 10

## Fourth Grade Brings New Fluency and Larger-scaled Revisions

Fourth grade brought many changes to our heroine. Susie had--quite literally-grown under my eyes. The pixie-like 8 year-old was 10 now, gangly with four inches of new height and shy about her braces, glasses and early adolescent pimples. Gone were the old references to snuggling with her daddy. Now Susie tended to write about her sister, her mother, and, most of all, her friends. She wrote about a puppet show she and Diane performed for their parents. She wrote about trying to fry bananas, and about the day her dog escaped. And a new form of writing entered her repertoire: love-notes. "Alan loves you," she'd write, then crumple the note into a wad and pass it from her desk to Amy's, from Amy's to Tricia's.

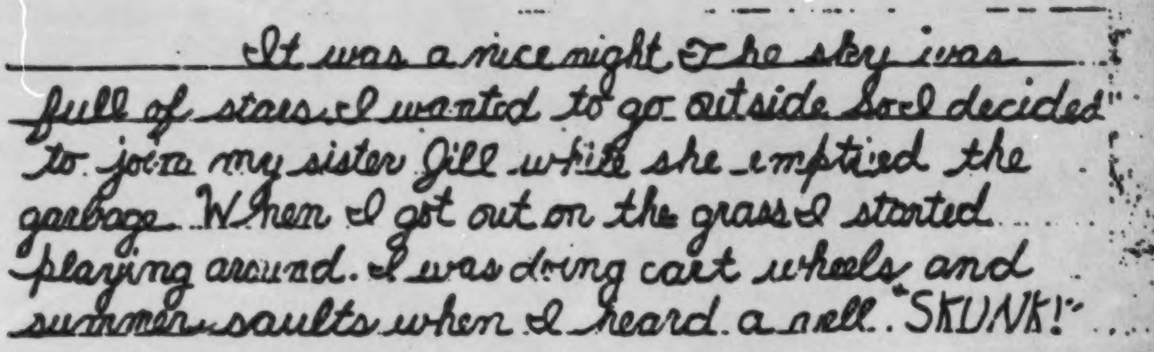
Susie's interests weren't the only things which were growing up. Her penmanship, too, was changing from uneven, lopsided printed letters to even, careful cursive ones:

Third grade:



that moust of the crumbs of pill were in her
mouth and then I let her out side. Oh No
is it going to be the same way to
tomarrow?!3!

Fourth grade:



It was a nice night The sky was
full of stars I wanted to go outside So I decided
to join my sister Jill while she emptied the
garbage When I got out on the grass I started
playing around. I was doing cart wheels and
summer saults when I heard a yell. "SKUNK!"

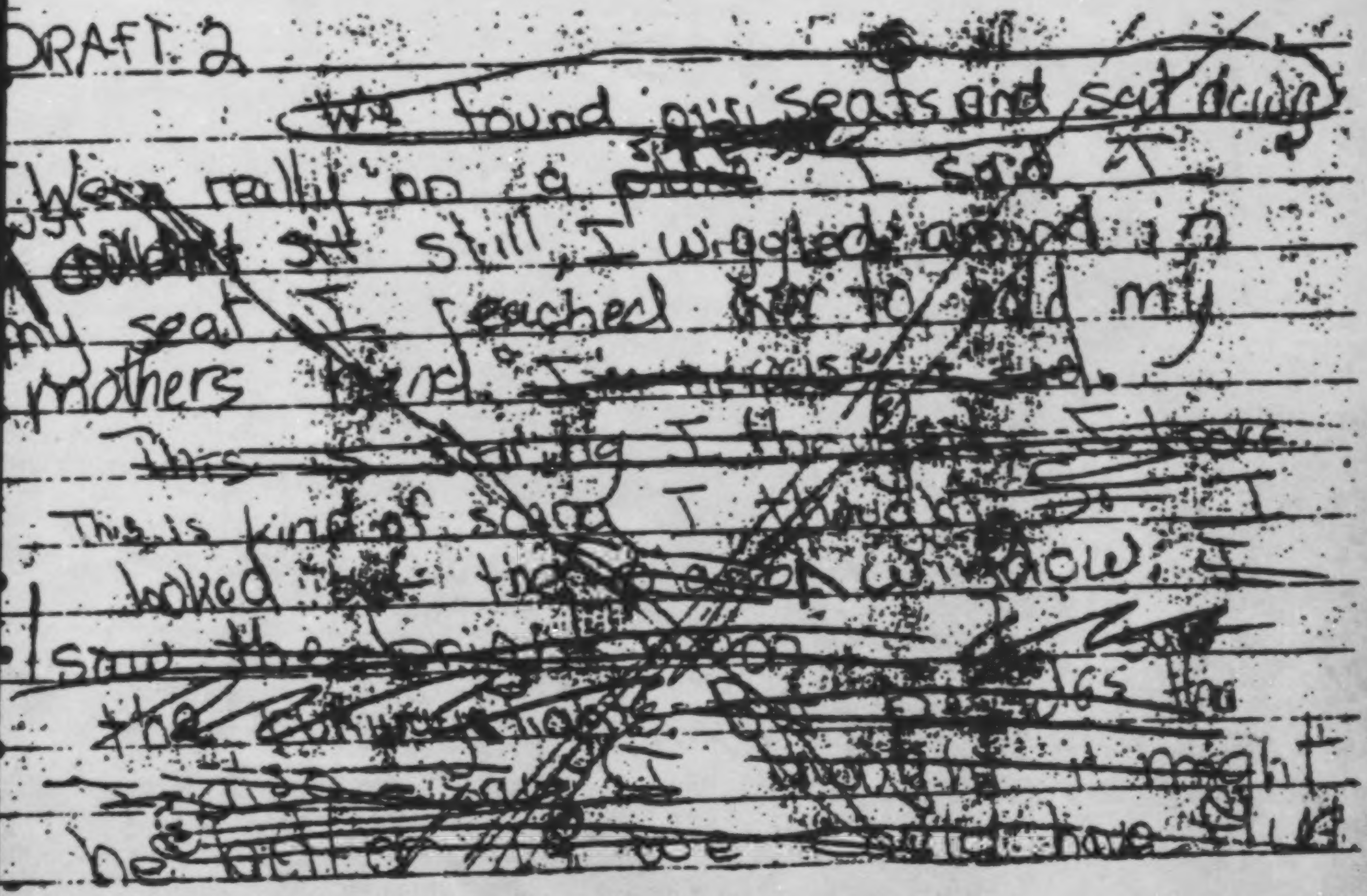
Despite the cautious penmanship, Susie's pieces had doubled in length. In third grade most of her drafts were less than a page long, now they usually exceeded two pages. In fourth grade, there were not only longer pieces, there were also more of them. Whereas Susie wrote about a dozen final drafts in third grade, she wrote three times that many in fourth grade.

Susie's new facility with writing, combined with a new tentativeness, led to new revision strategies. Now as Susie got her hands onto a draft and began to mold and shape it, she worked with bigger units. Over the course of fourth grade, she developed and internalized several strategies for large-scale revisions, and these are the subject of this chapter.

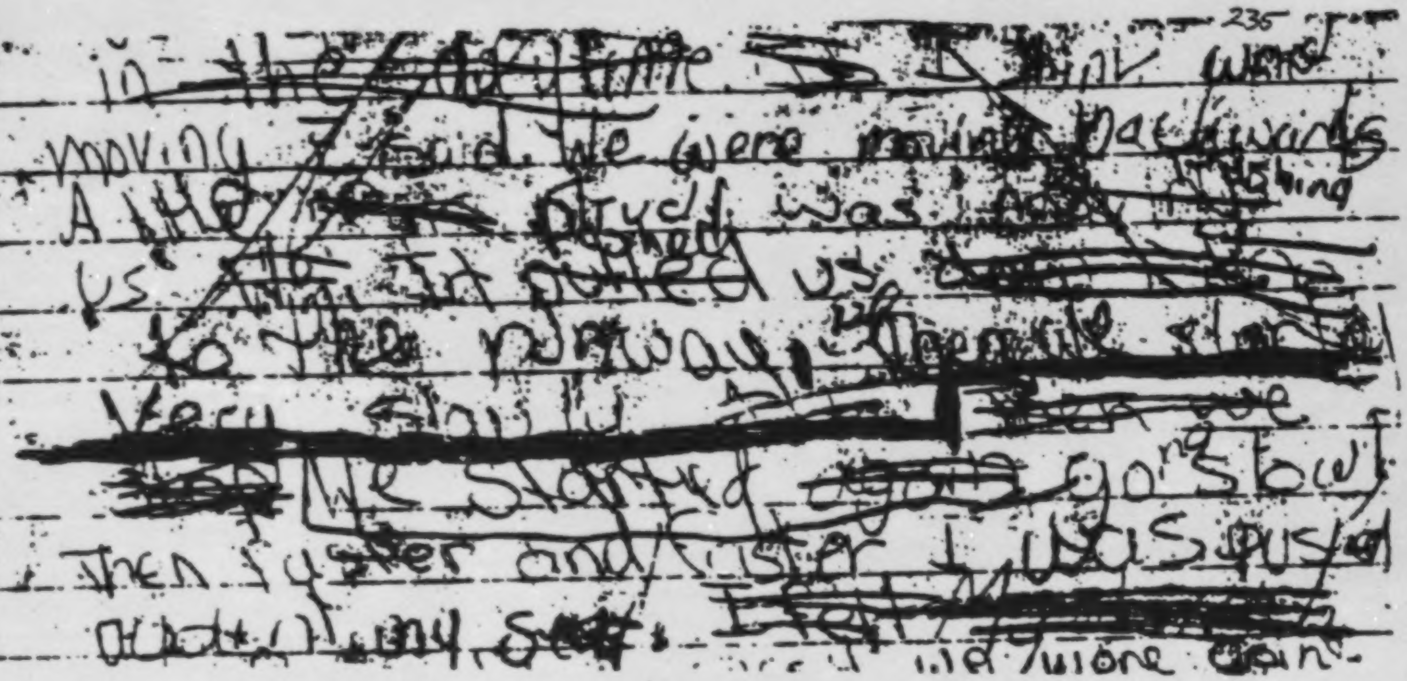
The first in a series of large-scale revisions came on a crisp October morning, one year after Susie was introduced to the concept of leads by having her teacher draw a dark line underneath Susie's opening "Learning to Fly." This time, Susie independently wrote and revised two drafts of "Flying in a Jet Plane," sharing the story occasionally with her friends but not with her teacher. Now she reread the second draft:

> We found our seats and sat down. 'We're really on a jet plane,' I said. I just couldn't sit still, I wiggled around in my seat. I reached over to hold my mother's hand. 'This is kind of scary,' I thought. I looked out the window. I thought it might be better if we could have flown in the daytime. 'I think we're moving,' I said. We were moving backwards. A little truck was pushing us. It pushed us to the runway. Then we started again, going slowly, then faster, and faster. I was pushed against my seat. My stomach felt hollow from the speed. I looked outside. The runway lights were going by faster and faster. The wheels were rumbling on the ground. All of a sudden, everything was smooth. 'We're flying.'
>
> I stared out the window. The higher we go, the prettier the lights looked. All different colors in funny patterns. I was so glad we were flying at night. I felt so excited.

Susie looked at the page for a few minutes, her eyes flickering from the beginning to the end of it. She seemed restless, and so I knew to stay near. "There is only one thing about the whole story," Susie said finally, her forehead creased into deep think-lines. "I don't know if I should cross out the whole first half and start it by making myself up in the air, looking down." Susie was hesitant, but nevertheless drawn to the idea. Penciling a dark line across her page, Susie said, "This is instead of cutting it up. I'll read it first with the early section; then I'll read it without that part. I'll see which is better." She had invented one of her first tentative-revision-codes, the dividing line. Soon Susie decided the pencil line could become a more permanent move. The front half of her story was scratched out:



DRAFT 2
~~We found our seats and sat down~~
~~We're really on a plane~~ ~~I said I just couldn't sit still, I wiggled around in my seat I reached over to hold my mothers hand.~~ [illegible]
~~This~~ [illegible]
~~This is kind of scary I thought. I looked out the window. I saw the~~ [illegible] ~~on the~~ [illegible]
[illegible] ~~might~~
~~he~~ [illegible] ~~we~~ [illegible] ~~have~~ [illegible]



For a long time, Susie had sensed that her writing could be made stronger and denser by eliminating extra sentences and words, but not until fourth grade did she regularly consider eliminating whole sections from her pieces. She had learned, as Picasso said:

> In each destroying of a beautiful discovery, the artist does not really suppress it, but rather transforms it, condenses it, makes it more substantial.

I recently showed the slashed-out section of "Flying in a Jet Plane" draft--and of other drafts--to Professor Leaska of New York University. An expert on Virginia Woolf, Leaska has spent years studying rough manuscripts of writers' work. He was astounded at Susie's page. "Letting go is the hardest thing for writers," he said, and then showed me how writers usually make hesitant, small cross-outs. Leaska wanted to know what had prompted Susie to make such bold, definitive cross-outs. I did not know the answer.

After Susie cropped her "Flying in a Jet Plane" story, she refined and enlarged the remaining section, building it into an entire story. Like a photographer in a darkroom, this young writer moved between cutting and expanding. Notice the changes that result:

| Sections of Draft 2 | Final Draft |
|---|---|
| We found our seats and sat down...I wiggled around...I looked out the window...A little truck was pushing us. It pushed us to the runway. Then we started very slowly. Then we stopped. We started again, going slowly, then faster and faster. I was pushed against my seat. My stomach felt hollow from the speed. I looked outside. The runway lights were going | We started going slowly, then faster and faster! It was so fast I was pushed against my seat. I looked outside. The runway lights were going by very fast. The plane wheels were rumbling on the ground. All of a sudden, everything was smooth. We're flying!' I said.<br>I stared out the window. The higher we got, the prettier the lights |

by faster and faster. The wheels were rumbling on the ground. All of a sudden everything was smooth. 'We're flying.'

I stared out the window. The higher we got, the prettier the lights got. All different colors in funny patterns. I was glad we were flying at night. I felt so excited.

looked. They were all different colors in strange patterns. I was so glad we were flying at night. I was so excited.

Right under us, I saw a big, dark hole. 'What's that?' I asked my mother.

'It's the Boston Harbor,' my mother said. The moon made a light on it. I could see the water now. I saw a long strip of lights; they were cars on the road. Everything looks so different when you fly.

After awhile I felt tired. Over our heads was a little cabinet. My mother got a pillow from inside it. I lay down with the pillow under my head. Soon I was fast asleep.

Susie was pleased with the improvement in her story, but in retrospect, I sense the notion of long-scale revisions was not yet firmly a part of her writing process. After Susie wrote a first draft for her next piece, "Seeing My Grandparents," she changed only words and sentences, then recopied the draft, again making small changes. Because it was a good story and Susie was invested in it, her teacher decided to intervene in a way which might push Susie a little farther. "Susie," Susie's fourth grade teacher said, "do you notice that all of your stories seem to be about the same length?" It was a wise observation, for Susie seemed to have developed a schemata for writing two-page stories, and each story was similar to the next. In the discussion that ensued, Susie's teacher suggested the girl challenge herself by taking the two-page draft of "Seeing My Grandparents" and extending it into a six-page draft.

This was not a common interaction between teacher and student--but it proved to be an effective one. Susie came to writing workshop the next day, eager to meet the new challenge. "I decided at home how to do it," she told me, and then she reread the two-page draft, circling sections of it with her pencil. "These circled parts are places I can spread out with more detail," she explained. Susie was approaching this new challenge as she approached most new things--in a systematic, deliberate way.

Susie immediately decided she could tell more about arriving at the airport--so the section of her draft was circled. And she could tell more about the crowds of people waiting at the airport--so that section was circled. "I had no idea there were so many parts I could fix up!" she said, her voice high with excitement. "I'm discovering more on this draft than I ever did. I never realized I could change so much!"

Watching Susie's eager response to her teacher's challenge, I was reminded that in the Piagetian growth model, organisms do not just grow on their own. They grow in response to interactions which challenge them, interactions which dislodge one equilibrium so that a new one can be reached. One of the tasks of a writing teacher is to intervene--with sensitivity and with a sense of timing--so as to nudge children on to new equilibria.

By the time Susie finished circling sections of her draft which could be expanded, most of the page had been circled. Then she set to work, recopying a few sections and expanding the others. Notice the differences and the similarities between the circled draft and the final one:

| Draft 1 - with circles | Final Draft |
|---|---|
| I started walking up to the airport from the plane. We had to go through a tunnel. I squeezed my mother's hand. I couldn't wait to | My mother and I started to get off of the plane. My sister, Jill, was right behind us. I looked at Jill. Her |

| | |
|---|---|
| see my grandparents. | face was red from excitement. She smiled at me. I giggled. I could tell she was just as excited as I was. |
| | By pulling my mother's hand, I hurried her to the entrance of the airport. As we got nearer, I heard the crowd inside, laughing and talking. I saw a lot of people. They were looking for the person they came to meet. They stretched their necks, searching through the crowd. Everyone was smiling, everyone was happy. |
| We were almost in the end. I saw my grandparents. | My grandmother's face was tanned. It made her look so healthy. My grandfather looked pretty much the same except he was tanned too. |

I ran to my grandmother and just hugged her. We were both so happy to see each other. My grandmother laughed and cried at the same time.

I let go of her and ran to my grandfather's arm. "Hi Bubba," I said.

Somebody stepped in front of me. I lost sight of my grandparents. The crowd was moving very slowly so I wiggled past everybody. I ran straight to my grandparents. First I went to my grandmother. I threw my arms around her.

"Hi, Babydoll!" My grandmother said. I gave her a kiss. My grandmother's eyes were filled with tears but she was laughing. We were so happy.

I turned around, my mother was hugging my grandfather. Jill was, too. I ran to him. He saw me and laughed. I hugged him, "I missed you both a lot," I said.

"I missed you and Jill, he

Hi, Susie," he said. After we finished saying hello, we went to get our luggage.

said.

I just couldn't believe I was with my grandparents in Florida. It had not struck me what time it was until I looked at the clock: 2:15 in the morning! Wow! I didn't realize how tired I was.

I thought of my father at home. We promised to call him as soon as we could. I wondered what he was doing right now.

"Susie," somebody said. It was my mother. "We have to get our luggage now," she said. I took hold of my grandparents' hands and started off.

Although I didn't know it at the time, Susie had developed a strategy which would become important not only in her writing, but also in her classmates' writing. As usually happened when children invented new strategies or worked in new modes, Susie's teacher asked the student to tell the class about her revisions.

A day or two later, I watched Birger reread a draft entitled "The Day My Cat Died." I asked Birger what he was thinking about as he reread the story, and the Norwegian boy answered, "I'm trying to make parts longer, like Susie did in her piece." Birger continued, "I'm going to add on at this part, when I come out of the garage, to the cat's accident. I'll tell about when I was walking across the driveway and I heard sounds, like the vet with the siren, and I smelled the air." Tow-headed Birger paused for a moment, and then, in his matter-of-fact way, he continued, "It wasn't bad air. I remember thinking it was hard to think that a part of me had just died--the air was so nice and clean."

Before long, Susie and her classmates were using the circle-and-expand strategy in conjunction with the dividing line strategy. On a cold December morning, Susie came into the classroom, bursting to tell her friends about the skunk which had been caught in their garbage can. When writing time came, she confided in me, "After it happened my sister and I were riding in the car and I made up a little story to my sister. I pretended I was an author and told her, like, 'Once upon a time, there was a young girl who went out to the garbage can...'" Then Susie began to spill words onto the paper, writing in quick, loopy letters. When she finished the draft, she shook out her cramped hand. It had been an unusually long story.

Draft 1

One night I accompanied my sister to empty the garbage. She started emptying the garbage while I was playing on the lawn. All of a sudden I heard a shriek. "Skunk!" someone yelled. My sister ran by. I started screaming, too. I didn't see the skunk but I still screamed. I ran to the house.

My father didn't know what was wrong. "A skunk!" We were crying. But later on me and my father went out to investigate. We started walking to the garbage can. I was hiding behind my father just in case he started to spray my father would block me. As we got closer I stayed behind. But after a while I went up to my father. He flashed the flashlight around the garbage can. "Where is it?" he asked.

"I think I heard Jill say in the garbage can."

"In the garbage can?" he asked.

We went closer and looked in the garbage can. I didn't see anything, but my father said, "He's there."

We decided he was trapped in there, but how to get him out?

My sister started creeping slowly behind. I was still hidden behind my father again. I asked my father to pick me up so I could see the skunk. He did. I looked in two glittering eyes. The skunk looked exactly like the ones in the zoo.

While I was in my father's arms, he started walking towards the garbage can for a better look. I jumped down. I did not want to go any closer.

"I know how," I said. "The big stick that holds the clothesline up will work."

"That's a good idea," my father said, "we'll try it."

My father told me to open our screen porch door so when he tips the garbage can he can run before the skunk sprays.

"Ready?" my father asked.

"Yes," I said.

With a brave attempt my father tipped the garbage can and came running to the house as fast as he could go. When he got to the house, we all looked out to see if we could see the skunk running off. Nothing happened. After a couple of minutes, a little skunk came trotting out of the garbage can as calmly as ever.

We went in the house and told my mother what had happened. There was one question: how did the skunk get trapped in the garbage can with the lid on?

We didn't do it. I didn't do it. Jill didn't do it. We all looked at my mother. "Did you put the lid on the garbage can recently?" we asked.

"Yes, I did," my mother said, not knowing what she did.

"Mom!" I yelled. "You put the lid on while the skunk was in there!"

As Susie scanned her first draft, she fixed up small parts of it. This juxtaposition of writing and refining by now seemed to be a natural part of Susie's writing process. To me, it was surprising that Susie still perfected the word choices, smoothed over transitions and added descriptions into her first drafts, for often these drafts were later discarded. It was almost as if these small touch-ups helped her gain distance on the piece.

Because I'd grown accustomed to the rhythms of Susie's process, I was not surprised when the next day came and Susie announced, "I'm going to do a whole 'nother draft." Before she began, she reread draft 2, circling several sections and then halfway through the story she drew a dividing line. "I might take off the whole end of it," she said, using the strategy she'd invented a month earlier during the "Seeing My Grandparents" story. Soon Susie had expanded the first part of her draft and cut away the rest. Now her story began with emptying the garbage can, and ended with the two girls yelling, "Skunk!" Susie was pleased with this new version, but her friends were not.

"The ending was good," they told her. "You should tell the whole thing." Quite happily, Susie erased her dividing line and set to work again. Notice the differences between these sections of draft 1 and comparable sections in her final draft:

| Sections of Draft 2 | The Revised Versions of These Sections |
|---|---|
| I was playing on the lawn. All of a sudden, I heard a shriek. "Skunk!" someone yelled. My sister ran by. I started screaming too. | I was doing cartwheels and somersaults when I heard a yell. "Skunk!!!" Jill was running to the house as fast as she could run, still screaming. I knew she saw a skunk. All of a sudden, the night seemed very scary. The dark shadows of big trees crept over the yard. I did not want to be out there with a skunk, so I ran right behind her as fast as I could. |
| We went closer and looked in the garbage can. I didn't see anything but my father said, "He's there." We decided he was trapped in there, but how to get him out. I asked my | My father very slowly walked closer. He shone the flashlight in the garbage can. "He's there," my father said. I was too short to see the skunk over the garbage can so I asked my |

father to pick me up so I could see the skunk. He did. I looked in, two glittering eyes looked up. The skunk looked exactly like the ones in the zoo.

father to lift me up. He did. I looked inside and there he was. I couldn't believe it. It was a small skunk. It had a small head compared to the size of its body. The flashlight made its eyes glitter. I was still looking at the skunk when my father started walking closer with me still up in his arms. I did not want to get any closer to the skunk so I jumped down quickly.

Over the course of the two-year study, there were many instances such as this one when Susie adapted a revision strategy to meet new needs. In third grade, for example, she used the lead-writing strategy first to find a spot in the sequence of events where she could start her story. Then, in "Snuggling with My Father," she used the strategy to experiment with different tacts on a subject. In "The Big Fish," when she wanted to revise a section which was embedded in the middle of her piece, she had borrowed the lead-writing strategy, only this time when she listed numbers down her page and wrote alternative ways to phrase a section, she was not experimenting with leads but instead with an important section from the middle of her piece. By the end of third grade, the strategy was used in yet another way, for now Susie often considered alternative leads in her mind's eye, and used the lead-writing strategy to help her think about possible endings and titles for her pieces.

Whereas the lead-writing strategy was particularly important in third grade, in fourth grade it was the circle-and-expand strategy which became an integral part of many of Susie's revisions. Again, the strategy was adapted to meet Susie's changing purposes. At first it was used as a way to expand on key sections of her piece, "Seeing My Grandparents." Later in that same piece, Susie used the strategy to evaluate whether the piece worked. "I'm going to reread it and think about it as sections; how I like each section. I know there are certain sections I like better than others and I wonder if I can do anything about it." As she picked up the story, she muttered, "First the part about when we entered the airport." Her eyes scanned the section. "I like it a lot. In this part I learned to describe people more and to add little things like 'we giggled.'" Susie's eyes moved down the paper. "The next section is about the crowd." She drew lines, framing the section. Knowing Susie, I was not surprised to see that when she divided the piece into parts and worked on each part separately, she did this in a systematic and concrete way. It would not have been enough for her to mentally divide the piece into sections. Lines had to be drawn, the new ways of thinking had to be grounded in physical, hands-on activities.

When Susie reread the section, she said, "It's kind of a long section and there are certain parts of it I like better than the others." She took out a new sheet of paper, explaining to me that it wasn't for a whole new draft, but for a new draft of the second section.

Susie's next adaptation of this strategy came in February of fourth grade. This time she was not writing a personal narrative, but instead, a social studies report. Probably because Susie was used to viewing her pieces as a collection of sections, she was intrigued with the way reference books were divided up by subtitles. Not surprisingly, she decided to do the same thing with her report on the Valley Glacier. And so Susie squeezed onto Diane's chair, and the two best friends talked about their reports. "I'm thinking of adding little sub-titles." Susie told Diane, and showed her one of the reference books. "See, it's still all one thing, but sub-titles." A few minutes later the two girls came up to me and asked, "When you make sub-titles, can you just say anything you want?" Soon Susie had inserted headings onto her report:

The Beginning of a Glacier
Making Mountains
How They Melt

Studying the Glaciers

What the Glaciers Left Behind

Susie's next step ahead came when she was working on "Swinging Vines," a story about an amusement park ride she and her mother had been on in Florida. Neither draft 1 nor 2 impressed me, but I wondered what Susie thought of them. "Susie," I asked, "what's the difference between the drafts?"

My young tutor promptly replied, "Draft 1 begins in this order: discussion of the ride, then description, then discussion." Then, glancing at the second paper, she said, "In draft 2, the order is different. First there's description, then discussion." Susie chatted along as if it was the most natural thing in the world to conceive of one's own text in terms of these subtle changes in tone. "On this draft, I started right on the ride," she said, and read the opening line to me:

> The ride was going its fastest...

"Then, on the next draft, I tried to ease it into the describing, not just to jump into it." To show me the difference between easing and jumping into the describing, Susie compared these two versions:

| Jumping | Easing |
|---|---|
| The ride was going its fastest. I was at Bush Gardens in Florida. | The ride was going its fastest. I was on the ride at Bush Gardens in Florida. |

I looked at the two drafts and could sense the difference she was telling me about. But where had she learned to categorize and analyze the sentences in her pieces?

On her next story, Susie again made an easy, offhand reference to the varied effects of different sections of the text, and again I was amazed. She said, "In this 'Around the Campfire' story, I notice that up here I have a different tone, explaining, than down here."

At the time, it seemed these new developments had come out of thin air, and that they represented a sudden leap forward in Susie's ability to distance from her own work and to view it analytically in terms not only of what she was saying, but also of how she was saying it.

But now as I reflect back on Susie's development as a writer, the changes seem less surprising. I can see the groundwork had been laid. In fourth grade, as in third grade, revision strategies which entered as concrete, systematic, and self-conscious routines had once again ceased to be elaborate rituals and had become part of Susie's "felt sense." Instead of occupying Susie's focal attention, these strategies had become tools which she could use towards other ends. It was natural and easy for Susie to divide her texts into sections for the purpose of analyzing each section. What had once involved systematic, deliberate control, was now part of Susie's magic touch. Once again, Susie had gained control in order to lose control, she'd become conscious of revision strategies in order to lose consciousness of these strategies.

Throughout much of third grade, the focus of Susie's attention and of mine was on her activities during writing. In time, Susie put other concerns onto center stage. This probably happened for Susie sooner than it happened for me; but in time I, too, was able to observe Susie's writing without my attention revolving around her developing ability to revise.

The remaining sections of this book deal with new areas of interest for me and for Susie. None of the topics are really new; they have all been implicit in my discussion of Susie's growth during third grade. What was new was the attention I paid to these aspects of Susie's writing development.

In the next four chapters, the new classroom and the new teacher, Mrs. Currier, are introduced. The emphasis in these chapters, as in Mrs. Currier's classroom, was on conferences--conferences between teacher and child, between children, and between a child and the other in herself.

After this there is a difficult chapter: hard to write and hard to read. In it, I attempt to deal with Susie's concept development. After that there are two sections which involve both reading and writing; the latter of them shows Susie's work on a social studies report.

## Chapter II

## A New Teacher, and a New Look at the Writing Conference

I've talked about changes in Susie's writing during fourth grade but haven't discussed changes in her classroom. The omission is not as big as it might seem, for the two classrooms approached writing in similar ways. The energy for writing was contagious, and Mrs. Curriur had been one of the first to catch the bug.

Sometimes during that first year, she'd hesitantly slip into Mrs. Howard's classroom and, cautious not to intrude, she'd hover at the edges of the room, watching, a soft-spoken, timid woman. She said little during those visits, but she must have learned a lot. For when the children and I graduated into her fourth grade classroom, we found Mrs. Currier had patterned her writing workshop after Mrs. Howard's. And so, again in fourth grade, children wrote regularly, three times a week. Writing time still began with a workshop and ended with a class meeting. Written work was still stored in cumulative and daily writing folders. The teacher's role was again to move among the children. Yet despite these similarities, there was a remarkably different aura to the classroom.

Whereas Mrs. Howard had been vivacious, quick to laugh and quick to anger, full of energy, ideas and her own momentum...Mrs. Currier had a gentler spirit. Once I watched her gather the children together and, with tears in her eyes, tell them, "Mrs. Currier has a very bad spelling problem. I don't always get words right, so you must help me." Often when the children came for help with their writing, Mrs. Currier would tell them, "I don't know what you can do to improve your story. You see, I'm just learning, too."

Ironically, the greatest strength in Mrs. Currier's teaching was her sense of inadequacy as a writing teacher. Whereas Mrs. Howard and I had vigilantly guarded ourselves against taking control of a child's story, Mrs. Currier would have found it utterly presumptuous to tell anyone how to change their writing. Only now that the study is over do I appreciate how crucial it is for teachers to insist children take charge of their own writing. Now, in retrospect, Mrs. Howard, Mrs. Currier and I are convinced that our job in a writing conference is to put ourselves out of a job. Our task is to respond to children's writing in such a way that children learn to respond to their own writing. We are not teaching the writing; we are teaching the writer. How easy it is for us to forget this and to rush into the conference, determined to improve the text, unaware that the only lasting effect of such a conference is that children are kept on writer's welfare; they are kept dependent on their teacher's evaluations, plans and solutions.

Now when I talk with teachers about the importance of leaving control in the writer's hands, I often tell them about ways I find myself taking control of writing conferences, not realizing what I've done until too late. Sometimes I catch myself literally taking the work out of the writer's hands and holding it in my own--what a message! Then, too, sometimes I realize I'm standing above the writer, firing questions down onto him. I sometimes take control of conferences because I'm the first to speak, eagerly imposing my agenda on the conference rather than asking, "How's it coming?" and following the writer's lead. I take control when I zero into specific questions about topics which interest me, never considering that what really counts are the topics which interest the writer. How easy it is to forget the piece belongs to someone else, and that my role is only to help students articulate what *they* want to say! My most subtle form of control, however, are my compliments. "I love your lead," I naively say, knowing full well that the young writer, desperate to please, will keep the favored lead at all costs. "Your story is perfect," I say, as if it were my role to evaluate when a story is finished, as if I could know when the piece matches the writer's intentions.

The question of who should lead in a conference is a delicate one, for we do not want our students to wander about endlessly, hoping they'll reinvent the wheel.

Donaldson captures the dilemma of control when she writes (1979) that the issue of control is

> a central dilemma for those who want to teach the young. There is a compelling case for control. The young child is not capable of deciding for himself what he should learn. (p. 125)

But Donaldson goes on to say,

> I can see only one way out of this dilemma. It is to exercise such control as is needful with a light touch and never to relish the need. It is possible after all for control to be more or less obtrusive, more or less paraded. Also a great deal will depend on what the teacher sees the aim of control to be. If the ultimate aim of control is to render itself unnecessary, if the teacher obviously wants the children to become competent, self-determining responsible beings and believes them capable of it, (then this may resolve the dilemma). (p. 126)

Whereas Mrs. Howard had tried hard to "render such control as was needed with a light touch," for Mrs. Currier the light touch was second nature. Only with great hesitation would she suggest ways a child might improve a piece; she was far more apt to ask writers to tell her their plans. And so, especially by the middle of fourth grade, she often began a conference simply by asking, "How's it coming?"

When we go to a physician we do not wait for the physician to tell us what hurts. Instead, we lead the way, teaching the doctor about how we feel, helping the doctor to help us. Similarly, when a writer shares his or her work in progress, the writer needs to begin by teaching the conference partner about what he or she intends to do, and how he or she feels about the emerging piece.

When Mrs. Currier asked her fourth graders, "How's it coming?" the youngsters who'd had Mrs. Howard the year before could take over the direction of a conference. "I don't think this part fits with the rest," they might say, or "I'm not sure it's exciting enough." But the fourth graders who were new to the writing process would give quite different answers. "I'm done," they'd say, handing Mrs. Currier their first draft. These children, early in the year, usually came to a conference entirely satisfied with their work, wanting Mrs. Currier to help them with editing.

With these children, it was not always enough for Mrs. Currier to ask, "How's it coming?" And so often she'd listen to the child, and then ask questions which helped the youngster reconsider what they'd written. In these questions she seemed to lead writers to an uneasiness and then to a self-posed challenge. Often in these conferences, Mrs. Currier chose the line of inquiry, after that she followed the child's lead. In retrospect, it seems she unconsciously chose between four tacts onto a conference. If the writer was entirely satisfied with a piece or ready to give it up, Mrs. Currier and the writer held an editing conference. These were similar to Mrs. Howard's editing conferences discussed earlier, and so they will not be included here. There were three other tacts onto a conference: the content conference, the process conference, and the evaluation conference. For the remainder of this chapter, I will describe these three tacts. The distinctions between them are somewhat arbitrary; in real life one tact merges with another as we follow where children lead.

## Content Conferences

"First, the children need to know they're being heard," Mrs. Currier said once about her conferencing. "Then they're..." She continued, but I had stopped. Her words were said so lightly, yet I held onto them. Being heard. I wanted to replay the words, to turn them into capitals or italics or the title for my next book. Isn't being heard what our lives are all about? Doesn't all teaching begin as listening?

It's funny. I once thought listening was easy. That you just sit back and listen and think about what you can say. Now I find listening is the hardest thing I do. I once thought watching the ball in tennis was easy, too. As a kid, my mother used to shout from across the net, saying, "Keep your eye on the ball." I remember thinking, obviously you watch the ball. Obviously you listen.

But today on the tennis courts, I watched the ball--and it was an entirely new sensation. I was mesmerized by the ball; watching it coming, as if in slow motion, then the bounce, the climb, then it hung, suspended for an instant.

Why was today different? Simply this: I wasn't apologizing for my bad shots, or berating myself. I wasn't thinking about bending my knees or about my arm swing. I wasn't tidying up my hair or pulling down my shirt because it had bunched around my waist. I wasn't thinking about myself. For the first time in years I had not been worrying whether I was okay. Instead, I'd been watching the ball.

Listening and being heard; they are tough words. And they are at the crux of all conferences, but most especially, of the content conference.

Both Mrs. Currier and Mrs. Howard's content conferences usually began as active listening. A child would read his work out loud, and then the teacher might say, "Jeremy, you've really helped me learn about your rabbit. I didn't know..." or she might begin, "Whew! What a hair-raising story. Let's see, first you..." Either way, both teachers often proceeded to retell what it was that they had heard. In neither case were they lavishing praise on children, yet the young authors felt validated.

More than that, active listening usually extended a child's writing process for, as therapists know, hearing what we have said leads us to embellish some points, to clarify others. The teacher follows--listening, extending, and eventually helping the writer see the disparity between the intended and the actual message. ("That seems important, Jeremy; do you want to put it in your story?") The child discovers an uneasiness which can be framed into a dilemma, and which can lead to revisions...and to experiencing what it is to do your best, and then to make your best, better.

Of course, it does not always work this way. Sometimes a piece contains all that the writer wanted to say, and there is no reason to revise. Just as often, children insist, "I like it just the way it is," because they do not know how to add information, because they are afraid of messing up their page. Which puts teachers in a spot, for if we want writers to feel control of their pieces, they must ultimately be the one to chosse whether or not to revise their work. Yet can we nudge reluctant revisers along?

Mrs. Giacobbe solved the dilemma by asking one youngster who said he liked his story just the way it was, "If you were going to add the information, where would you put it?" Then after they talked about how writers squeeze words into their margins or use arrows to add lines, she could let the writer decide whether or not to revise, knowing the child had the tools he needed.

Often Mrs. Howard and Mrs. Currier's content conferences were geared towards either helping a writer focus their subject or else helping them to expand their information. Either way, the conferences began with listening to the child's piece or to his topic, and then letting the child know he had been heard.

In focus conferences, Mrs. Currier might exclaim, "What a lot of things you have written about here!" Then she and the child might list or review all the topics which had been touched on in the piece. Then, and only then would the teacher ask questions which could lead to focus. These alternate ways to phrase a question emerged only in time; they were not part of the classrooms at first. Some teachers preferred one question to another, but in general, there was a lot of cross fertilization of conferencing techniques between Mrs. Howard, Mrs. Currier, Mrs. Giacobbe and the three researchers. Here are some focus questions:

> What is the one most important thing you are writing about? Where do you get to that topic? Do you need all the rest?
>
> or
>
> Of all the things you have written about, what is the one thing you most want to focus on?
>
> or
>
> Lots of times after I write a first draft, I reread it and try to underline the most important part. You

might want to try that.

Focus conferences often became expansion conferences, for as soon as a child narrowed his topic from "My Trip to Florida" to "The Swimming Race with My Mother," the youngster would begin to worry that his story would be "awful short." By staying an extra minute, Mrs. Currier could help the child realize how much he had to say. If she looked him in the eyes and asked, with real interest, "What happened during that swimming race?" she could help the youngster expand his story with detail.

Often children test us. They do not believe we are really interested in their lives, and so they give a cursory answer, a quick summary. The temptation is to try to draw out more detail by asking specific questions. "How cold was the water? Was it a long swimming pool?" Such questions rarely tap into a child's energy, for they do not lead the child to talk about the details which interested him. Mrs. Currier soon learned a more effective tactic was to circle back to the story itself, asking the child, "Will you tell me again what happened; tell me the details, because I want to be able to picture the whole thing." Sometimes she and the other teachers would phrase it differently, asking, for example:

> So, if I'd been standing there, what would I have seen?
>
> or
>
> If you were going to make a movie of that incident,

what would I see happening first on the screen? How would it begin?

or

So, let me see if I got this straight. It all started... how?

Process Conferences

For a long time the teachers and I distinguished between teaching and research. When we asked the children to explain their thinking to us, we referred to these as interviews, not conferences. We asked questions such as these, and thought they were for our education, not for the children's:

> I notice you've crossed this line out. How did you go about deciding to do that?
>
> What new problems did you run into when you wrote this draft?
>
> How is draft 1 different from draft 2?
>
> When you were writing this, did you just pick up your pencil and write...or did you stop and think? Can you remember where you stopped?
>
> What are you planning to do next?
>
> How is your writing changing?
>
> What does a person have to do to be a good writer?

"For research reasons" we continued asking our questions...and then, especially in fourth grade, the children made us realize the teaching power of our questions. One after another of our "average" kids began to show an unusual ability to articulate their intentions, to critically review their work, to consider their strategies, and to consciously guide and control their thinking. Listen to what these fourth graders have to say about their writing:

> Researcher: Sometimes, Amy, when you are writing, you stop and think. What are you thinking about?
>
> Amy: I look up and like I can picture my cat Sidney and it is just like she is sitting in front of me. I can see her in the snow for the first time, lifting her paws high and shaking them out, then getting all flattened out and plowing through the snow. It is like I have a movie in my mind, and the words just come off of me. I'm like a typewriter, clicking them off.
>
> Researcher: Is your writing changing? Are you running into any new problems?
>
> Birger: Yes, I usually put people into my stories now because when there are other people than me in the story, then I don't have to say 'I did this and I did that.' Instead I can put the other people saying to each other, 'Where did he go?'...I can have the other people do the talking, keeping things explained.
>
> Researcher: Susie, will you tell me how you go about writing a story?
>
> Susie: Usually I put down a sentence that I don't even like. It isn't even going to be in the piece. I

just put it down and keep going right through it. Rewriting is important because your first draft--you don't think much about it, but for your second draft, you look at the other draft and cross out what's bad and put down other things.

All my efforts not to teach the children had been to no avail: my presence at a child's side, even my silent interest in their process of craft, had been a powerful teaching force. Because Mrs. Howard, Mrs. Currier and I continually asked Susie and her classmates to put their thinking into words, the children were exceptionally aware of their intentions and strategies. The children saw our fascination with their thinking, and they began to look at it too, asking, "So what am I doing now?" "What kinds of things could I do next?" "What am I after?"

Donaldson, Vygotsky, Piaget, Cazden, Bruner...all of these insightful students of children's thinking...have emphasized that this kind of awareness of ones own thinking is a crucial step towards being able to direct ones thinking. Bruner writes (1966):

> I suspect that much of growth starts out by turning around on our own traces and recording in new forms... what we have been doing or seeing...We say, 'I see what I was doing now,' or 'So that's what the thing is.' (p. 21)

Similarly, Vygotsky says (1962):

> ...control of a function is the counterpart of one's consciousness of it. (p. 90)

He goes on to claim that the growth of "consciousness and deliberate mastery" are "the principal contributions of the school years" (1962).

Donaldson builds on Vygotsky's claim, saying quite bluntly:

> If a child is going to control and direct his own thinking...he must become conscious of it. (p. 96)

Even before Mrs. Currier and I had recognized the teaching power of these interviews (or process conferences, as they came to be called), she'd found ways to extend them. Whereas for research purposes, we tended to ask children what they had done, Mrs. Currier soon began to ask what they could do. "What are you planning to do next?" she'd ask. It was a powerful question.

Youngsters who'd lined up behind their teacher hoping to be told what to do next, would suddenly find the decision placed back into their own hands. After reading and responding to their piece, Mrs. Currier would return the work to the writer's startled hands. Then with all the faith in the world, she'd ask, "What are you planning to do next?" It was wonderful to see. Children stared open-mouthed for a moment, then regained their balance and said, "Oh, well, I was thinking I could..."

Now when teachers tell me they feel insecure over what questions to ask in conference, I assure them that they cannot go wrong by reading the children's work, caring about their content, and asking simply, "What are you planning to do next?" It is, indeed, a powerful question.

Donaldson writes:

> Piaget's findings and arguments are complex, but one point that emerges very clearly is that awareness typically develops when something gives us pause and when consequently, instead of just acting, we stop to consider the possibilities of acting which are before us. The claim is that we heighten our awareness of what is actual by considering what is possible. We are conscious of what we do to the extent that we are conscious of what we do not do--of what we might have done. The notion of choice is thus central. (p. 97)

Sometimes in these process conferences, children would have no plans and then Mrs. Currier might suggest they experiment with strategies writers often use. For example, we earlier saw Mrs. Currier encouraging Susie to expand her two-page story into a six pages. And, with some children she recommended they break their story into parts and work on each part separately as if it were a whole story. Once she told children about how writers sometimes cut their stories into parts and rearrange the sequence of the parts. "I want the kids to have a sense of their options, because

I never knew about them when I was a child," she said. Sometimes, but rarely, this meant encouraging children to try something they never would have thought of on their own.

Originally the strategies came from Mrs. Currier and from knowledge she'd get from me and from books on what writers do with their drafts. But soon children were inventing and sharing their own strategies, and Mrs. Currier had only had to direct them to use each other as resources, saying "You might want to try what Susie did yesterday, do you remember how we talked about it at the end of the day?" or "Why don't you take this draft over to Greg and see if the two of you can come up with some good revision strategies you could experiment with."

Evaluation Conferences

In order to document children's developing ability to critically assess their own work and their emerging criterion for judging writing, I asked children questions such as these at regular intervals:

> What do you have to do to be a good writer?
>
> If you had a pile of stories, and you were going to divide them into two piles--good stories and bad stories--how would they be different?
>
> Which is the best story you've written so far this year? Which is the next best? What makes one better than the next?
>
> What makes for a good lead?

What makes for a good topic, etc? Initially, Mrs. Howard, Mrs. Currier and I viewed these questions like the process interviews, as part of research rather than of teaching. But we soon found that because we asked children to look back and assess their own work, the youngsters began to ask the same thing of themselves and of each other. A child would finish a draft, and immediately their eyes would climb back up the page, and the youngster would have shifted from writer to reader, reminding me of a quote by Ciardi:

> ...the last act...of writing must be to become one's own reader. It is, I suppose, a schizophrenic process. To begin passionately and to end critically, to begin hot and to end cold; and, more important, to try to be passion-hot and critic-cold at the same time.

Instead of relying on their teacher as the judge for their emerging texts, children learned to accept the responsibility for assessing their work. Once I watched a youngster try to weasel Mrs. Howard into telling her what was good and bad about her paper. The child approached her teacher, waving a story. Mrs. Howard didn't automatically reach for it and begin reading it, as she once would have done. Instead she asked, "How can I help you?"

"Read it," the young writer said. And her teacher read it, chuckling at sections, showing her appreciation of the tale. Then she thanked the child for letting her read it, and turned to the next youngster.

"Wait--do you like it?" the young writer asked.

Mrs. Howard paused thoughtfully and said to the insistent child, "What do *you* think of it?"

"I want to know what *you* think," the child answered.

"What do you think I think of it?"

This time the child looked at her teacher for a moment, then she said, "I don't know. I haven't read it yet."

# Chapter 12

## "There are 24 Writing Teachers in this Classroom"

Whereas my emphasis has been on Mrs. Currier as a teacher of writing, her emphasis was on helping children become teachers for each other. "There are 24 writing teachers in this classroom," she'd tell the children. "Each one of you has to be a writing teacher. You have to help each other because I'm no expert."

The children grew to believe her. In the classroom, youngsters who were good at teaching writing were respected, much as the best artist or the best math student is usually respected. It was not uncommon for visitors to be told, "You should talk to that kid, he's a great conferencer." Although Susie was not considered the best writer in the room, the consensus seemed clear: she was the best writing teacher. Diane said it well. "Susie's the one I can barely say 'no' to. Her ideas for my writing are always good, and she knows how not to hurt me."

Not only Susie, but all the children, were better at peer conferencing than they had been as third graders. Perhaps this was because they were 9 years old now, and growing in their ability to view things through someone else's perspective. Perhaps it was because Mrs. Currier unknowingly provided such a powerful example of good conferencing, or because peer-conferencing was valued. I do not know.

I do know that the children sensed Mrs. Currier's goodness and responded in kind. They were good to her and good to each other. Whereas the year was not a "thrilling" one with each day bringing new and exciting adventures, the children did learn to trust and to help each other. In retrospect, I wonder if anything could have been more important for pre-adolescents and for writers.

Above all, Mrs. Currier was extremely careful to help children be good to each other. In a class share meeting, for example, if a youngster didn't seem to be listening, she'd quietly say to the writer, "Would you read your story over, I don't think we were all able to hear it." And if one child was hurtful to another--even in the roll of their eyes--Mrs. Currier would stop everything and talk about how every writer needs to trust their audience. She modeled respect for other people, expected it from the children, and insisted on it. And so, at an age when children often grow increasingly self-conscious and hesitant to share, her children grew more trusting and more able to help each other.

Children who had problems with writing flourished in such an environment. One little girl who'd been crippled through cerebral palsy learned to poke her way through little typewritten stories. Kelly's stories were often just a few lines, but they were treated with just as much respect as as were the long and elaborate stories written by Birger, Trisha, Diane, Amy, Brad, Susie and others. Because revision was seen as a way to celebrate and build upon the potential of a piece, every child usually revised their best work. Beneath Kelly's typewritten story rough drafts, she'd add new information that resulted from a conference with a friend:

One night ~~We~~ we when* ~~some where~~. ~~Then~~ We came back and we w~~h~~ere looking for Samatha my cat. WE couldn't find her. We lobked evéywhere. ~~The~~ Her bab~~y~~ies w~~h~~ere hugery, so ~~so~~ my father's girl friend Diane, and my sister want down to the store and got some canned milk and four eye drops for Diane. She tobk the canned milk and mixed it with warm water. Then she took one kitten and fed him with the eye drop ful of ~~wath~~ milk. ~~and The~~ She fed all of the kittens a little be cause they ~~was~~ had all ready been fed some milk, ~~to them~~. I sartdd crying because I thought the kittens ware cold. ~~Then~~ My sister and I what to bed. Then my father went to look fer ~~her and~~ Samatha he found her, I was so happy when my father found her.

I Thought Samath

some Friends get

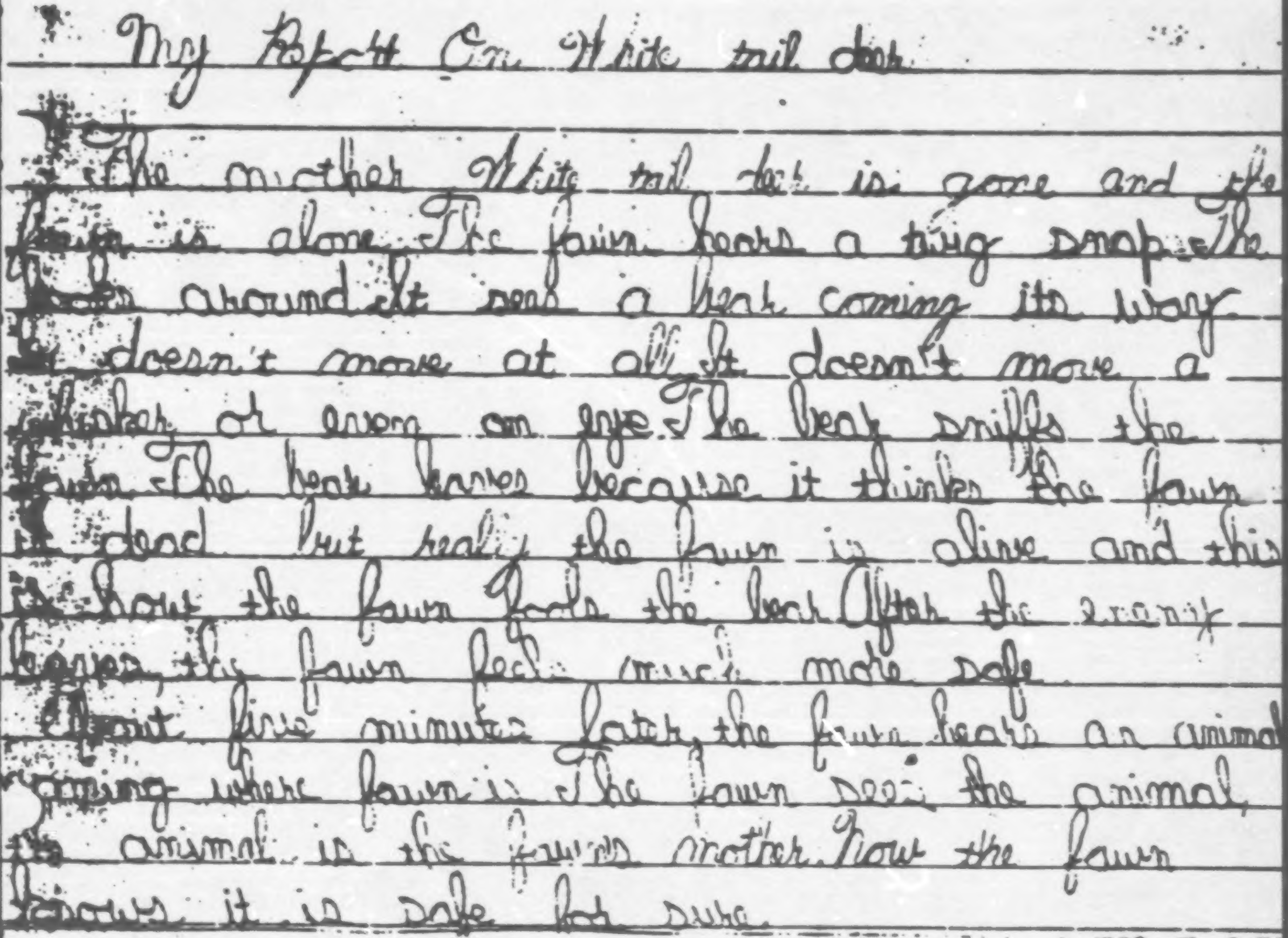
Kill

*to visit

THEEND

mar 30 195

By the time Greg entered this classroom, his skills were already immensely improved. But it was in fourth grade that Greg's confidence began to match his new abilities. Instead of writing about angry topics, as he had done in the "Goofy" story and in many of his third grade pieces, Greg began to write stories which were filled with tenderness such as this beginning to his report about the white-tailed deer:



My Report On White tail deer

The mother White tail deer is gone and the fawn is alone. The fawn hears a twig snap. The looks around. It sees a bear coming its way. It doesn't move at all. It doesn't move a whisker or even an eye. The bear sniffs the fawn. The bear leaves because it thinks the fawn is dead but really the fawn is alive and this is how the fawn fools the bear. After the enemy leaves, the fawn feels much more safe.

About five minutes later, the fawn hears an animal coming where fawn is. The fawn sees the animal. The animal is the fawn's mother. Now the fawn knows it is safe for sure.

This report was not Greg's first draft. Like the others in his classroom, Greg sometimes wrote five or six drafts of a piece, and usually wrote at least three drafts. Often these drafts were written without conferences from Mrs. Currier. The children were good at helping each other.

It was not by accident that the children learned to help each other with writing in-progress. Mrs. Currier not only emphasized peer-conferencing, she also helped children develop skills in conferencing. She did this, to some extent, through mini-lessons.

These lessons began at my urging. With much trepidation, Mrs. Currier and a young volunteer held a public conference in front of the classroom, and then Mrs. Currier asked the class to replay the conference, thinking about what worked and what didn't work. Soon these public conferences became commonplace. Mrs. Currier used them to illustrate ways the children could become good listeners, and to warn children against taking control away from the writer. Mostly, she used them to show the importance of asking good conference questions.

On one wintry morning, Mrs. Currier asked each child to list 10 questions they wished children would ask in conference. The questions were then shared, discussed, and eventually compiled into a huge chart entitled Good Conference Questions. This was Susie's contribution to that list:

1. How do you like your story? How do you feel about it?.

2. Does your title fit your story?
3. Do you have more than one story in your piece?
4. Can you add more feeling to it?
5. Is there more you could add?
6. Tell me what happened in detail.
7. Are there too many extra things in it that you don't really need?
8. Are you going to keep working on it?
9. Have you enjoyed writing it?

I was interested to notice that Susie's list moved from an evaluation question to focus questions and then expanding ones, then to editing, and finally to process questions.

From time to time during the year, Mrs. Currier and the children talked about specific qualities of good writing. Usually discussions on qualities of writing evolved into discussions on ways to help each other reach these qualities. Although the class never gathered their leads into a chart, they easily could have compiled something like this:

Questions which help writers focus:

-What is the most important thing you are saying?

-Why did you choose this topic? What's important about it to you?

-Which is the most important part of your story? Why?

-Where do you get to your main idea?

-Is there anything that doesn't seem to fit?

-Do you think you have two stories, or one?

Questions which help-writers 'show not tell:'

-Read me the places where you think you describe it well.

-Are there places you could describe more? I can't always picture it.

-Have you tried to underline the places where you tell us something, like 'he was ugly,' and then rewrite those on another sheet of paper?

-If I'd been watching you, how would I have known that--like you say in the paper--you felt sad? What exactly would I have seen?

Questions which help writers expand their pieces:

-In your own words, tell me all about this. What else do you know about the topic?

-What questions do you think people will have for you? If you answer them now, you get rid of some of the questions.

-Could you go through your story, reading me a line, then telling me more about it?

-Why don't you try reading your story over and putting a dot on the page wherever there is more to tell.

Questions which help a writer reconsider the sequence:

-Let's see, what did you tell first? Second? Third? (they make a list) Is there any other way you could order this? Why did you decide to put it in this order?

-Have you tried cutting it up and putting it into a different order?

-Could you make this into a flashback?

The daily share meetings were also a vehicle for helping children become good writing teachers. When children shared work-in-progress, Mrs. Currier suggested both the writer and the listener follow a format which could pertain to all peer-conferences:

1. The writer began by explaining where he was in the writing process, and what help he needed. For example, a child might say, "I'm on my third draft and I want to know if you can picture it," or "I have six titles and I can't decide which is best."
2. Usually, but not always, the writer then read the piece--or the pertinent section of the piece--out loud.
3. The writer called on listeners to retell what they heard. "I learned that..." they'd say, or, "Your piece began..."
4. Questions or suggestions were then offered, not about everything, but about the concern raised by the writer. Sometimes other things would come up as well, but not always.

Like Mrs. Howard, Mrs. Currier encouraged her children to follow a line of questions rather than hopping from one topic to another, as in this very typical interaction:

Listener #1: Where are you in this story?
Writer: I was sitting on the boat.
Listener #2: What happens next in the story?

At that point in the discussion, Mrs. Currier would typically intervene, reminding children to follow through on one question before moving on to the next. The discussion would then backtrack and might continue like this:

Listener #1: Where were you in this story?
Writer: I was sitting on the boat.
Listener #2: Exactly where were you?
Writer: Well, I sat up in the bow of the boat with my legs hanging over the edge.
Listener #1: Now I can picture it! Do you think you should add that in, because it was confusing to not know where you were in the story.
Writer: I'll look at it and see if it goes in. Any other questions or suggestions?

Although Mrs. Currier's mini-lessons on peer conferences were helpful, I expect they weren't nearly as powerful as her example. Because she had predictable conferences with children, Mrs. Currier's students soon learned to anticipate the questions she might ask in a conference. They came to conferences with answers already formed. Equally importantly, they began to ask each other the questions which had been asked of them. "What are you planning to do next?" the children would ask each other, and "How can I help?" They learned to listen well to each other because Mrs. Howard, Mrs. Currier and I had listened well to them. They learned to ask broad, open-ended questions of each other, because Mrs. Howard and Mrs. Currier asked these same questions of them. They learned not to take ownership from each other because Mrs. Howard and Mrs. Currier tried not to take ownership from them. We teach not only by *what* we teach, but also by *how* we teach.

## Chapter 13

## Peer Conferencing and the Writing Workshop

When visitors stopped by to see Mrs. Currier's classroom, they'd usually find several children rehearsing for writing while others were immersed in drafts. A few students might have red pen in hand, a sure sign that they were editing. One or two children might be at the back of the classroom, reading homemade books filled with final drafts. Others would be writing to a pen pal. Often two or three children were just drifting about, disconnected from their work. Invariably, six or eight youngsters would be conferring with each other or their teacher.

Now when I work with teachers who are trying to follow "the Atkinson model," I find they often are unaware that at Atkinson peer-conferences occurred throughout the entire writing process. Conferences weren't postponed until a draft was completed; instead, these interactions were woven throughout the history of a piece, sustaining and extending its life-force. In this chapter, I will try to show some of the different conferences which occurred within the writing process.

It was not unusual for children to help each other with topic selection. During the fall of fourth grade, I watched Diane sit restlessly over a paper entitled "Topic Ideas."

Fifteen minutes went by, and still the paper was blank. And so Diane pulled a chair alongside her best friend's desk. "I keep giving up on my stories," she said. "I go to put them in my folder and there are four others there I still have to finish. Now I'm out of ideas."

"How 'about the summer?" Susie asked. "What did you do?"

"Just swam."

"Was there any time when swimming was interesting?"

"I just swam with Debbie."

"Any fun times you had?" Susie asked, still hopeful.

"Well, I played seesaw with a friend, and I went canoeing."

Susie's face lit up. "Why don't you write about canoeing?" she said, egging Diane on.

"I was embarrassed. The neighbor made me sing fairy-tale songs," Diane answered, but this time there was the ring of energy in her voice. "I guess I do have some ideas." And Diane returned to her desk to quickly make this list:

Choppy Waters
A Wet Surprise
393 Steps to Go
Puppet Show

Within a few minutes, Diane had a beginning:

> Amy and I hopped onto the sailboat, pulling her uncle in. "Ready?" he asked.
>
> "Okay," we both said. The wind blew wildly as

we took off.

Susie had helped Diane brainstorm for topics, but the decision had been Diane's. These girls and their friends prided themselves on independence, and as part of this, on choosing their own topics. For this reason they were disdainful of the "Voting Box," a topic-selection system invented by Birger and used by many of the boys. (See Table 2)

Insert Table 2 about here

Once when Birger came to Susie with his tally sheet, asking her to vote for her favorite topic, Susie took his tally sheet to her friends and with much giggling, they added scores of checks alongside each topic, thereby thwarting his system and forcing Birger to make his own decision. I enjoyed the scene heartily, for although I didn't confess it, I'd never been very fond of the voting box. The real coup, however, came a few weeks later. Birger had listed possible topics and carefully drawn his voting box. Then, alone at his desk, he started adding votes into his box. "One vote for #2," he said, "and one vote for #4." Like the commentator at the racetrack, he continued. "Two votes for #3, one for #1..." until finally he announced, "And the winner is: #3!"

Just when Birger and many of the boys became more independent in their topic selection, there was a flurry of interest among Susie and her friends for stories which starred and co-starred each other. Susie wrote several consecutive stories about adventures she'd shared with Diane. Diane returned the favor, until another classmate, Amy, slept over at Diane's house. That week Diane gave up on a story about Susie, and started a new piece, "Playing with Amy on the Garage Roof." At this point, Susie returned to stories about her mother and her dog, Caspar. During those months, it seemed the rise and fall of friendships could be plotted in the topics children chose. When I asked Susie about this, she indicated the point was not to produce final products which honored a friendship, but to have companionship during writing time. She explained:

> I write about my friends if I'm on good terms with them. Then I'll go over and say, 'Remember when we did this and that?' and I get all excited and build it up. It helps me when people push me on like that. I keep going more if people want my story.

After deciding on a topic, these young writers sometimes worked on their own for several days, re-emerging with a draft in hand. Just as often, their interactions with each other continued. When Diane was caught in a writer's block--not an uncommon thing for her--she often relied on Susie to prompt her beyond the stalemate. "I don't know why, but it helps her to say the story out loud," Susie explained. And so when Diane told Susie she only knew boring stuff about the beaver and therefore couldn't find a good beginning for her report, Susie, quite predictably, asked Diane questions about the beavers:

Why did you decide to write about them?

Imagine you were a beaver, how would you work?

How would you feel?

Her questions yielded results. "I'd feel wet!" Diane answered, "and muddy. They carry mud on their tails, their strong tails scoop up mud and then splashes it on the dam."

"What do you think about what you said?" Susie answered, paraphrasing Diane's description of how beavers work.

Nothing could stop Diane now. "On the side of the river there is soft mud. And they start digging and digging and sometimes water starts splurting in and their lodge overflows." Diane talked quickly, no longer needing Susie to prompt her with questions.

Susie, meanwhile, was leaning forward at her desk, following Diane's every word, nodding in affirmation. It was as if, at that moment, nothing in the world was more interesting to her than beavers. "Once I saw a thing about beavers and it was sad because a family of beavers froze," she said, and added, "We have warm houses and they don't."

"The growing of beavers is sad, too. The babies get kicked out when they begin to grow up and it's crowded. I don't think that's fair. The adults should get kicked out," Diane said. Then Diane looked about the room, making sure no one was listening. She lowered her voice. "The mating seasons are yucky. Boy and girl beavers go into the lodge. I can't say what happens." She paused, significantly, then continued in a stage whisper. "They mate, and the female lays down and the male stands up. But beavers don't usually stand up because their head hits the top of the lodge. And the water starts to come in and the female has to move. But she's kind of heavy (if you know what I mean)." The girls giggled at this reference to the weight of pregnancy.

Susie redirected Diane's attention to the empty page. "Before you started to talk, you weren't much interested, and now you are talking and talking," she said.

"But if I put this all down, it'll be five pages."

"Is that wrong?" Susie's question was unnecessary for Diane had already begun to write.

On that particular morning, Diane did not experiment with different leads, but on many other occasions she did, and sometimes she involved Susie in that phase of her writing process. Once when both Diane and Susie were writing about a puppet show they'd done together, Diane asked Susie, "How should I start it? Should I say, 'Susie,' I yelled?"

Susie's answer couldn't have been more appropriate. "Try it," she said. "Try it; why not?"

Susie not only gave help on leads, she also received it. As we saw earlier, her classmates helped by listening to her leads, as she wrote them, one by one. In this way they provided an external executive function for Susie. When she was able to talk about a lead, it was far more likely that her next lead would be a different tact on the subject rather than simply being farther into the same sequence of events.

Sometimes Susie also benefited from talking with her friends about the qualities of a good lead. Once when she and Birger were leafing through the wallpaper books which held their final drafts, Birger called Susie's attention to the way he started his pieces. "They're all the same!" he noticed. "My leads are all sound effects." Then he turned the pages of his book, reading off each lead:

-Zoom. I rode right past my grandfather.

-Puff, puff. I ran exhaustedly down the road.

-"I know my way through here easy," I said, unsurely.

-"Arrr!" I put my brake on. I was going over to Trevor's.

The two children were both excited and dismayed by their discovery. "If I was a professional," Birger said, "they'd probably give up on reading my books 'cause they'd all be the same."

Once topics had been chosen and leads written, children might spend as much as several hours, or as little as several minutes, on a draft. When I tell this to teachers, they often comment, "But my children's attention spans could never last an hour!" Neither did these children's. Instead, the youngsters moved in and out of an immersion in their work. Sometimes they'd grasp their pencils tightly, lean low over their papers, and block out the rest of the world. Other times, they'd lean back in their chairs, surveying their work, scanning the classroom.

In first grade, children usually carried on a running monologue during these interludes. "Okay, now I've done four pages," a child might say, "and I drawed a pretty dress, and now I have three more pages to go, and what will I tell, let's see..."

In fourth grade, children were more apt to use these interludes as a time for brief discussions with each other. Often, like artists in a studio, they just shared their craft. Diane looked up from her first draft and said, to no one in particular, "I can tell I'll have lots of drafts. It's because I like the story. If I don't like it, I just fix it up on the same paper."

Susie, who hadn't seemed to be listening at all, responded without looking up from her paper. "Same here. I work harder when I like the story." Then she continued with her writing, and so Diane tried another friend.

"Hey, Wendy, you know, I'm going to have the same luck as you. You know how you used to do mounds and mounds of drafts. Now I'm going to have to do that, too!" Wendy didn't take the bait; she, too was involved in her work. And so Diane reread her story, and soon she, too, was writing.

Although neither Mrs. Howard nor Mrs. Currier commented on the correctness of a child's draft until the piece had been revised for content and the writer was ready to edit, it was not unusual for children to chat about their spelling or punctuation during the process of drafting a piece. "Is this the punctuation which means "one, two three minutes went by?" a child asked, drawing an ellipsis onto his paper.

"If you want to add excitement to your stories, put in these 'explanation marks,' " another child told his friend.

"I don't know whether to say 'the bear was big'--or 'enormous,'" Susie mused, then solved the quandry by choosing 'big,' then adding three exclamation marks.

Diane once turned to Amy and said, "I know this is a wierd question, but I haven't used this word in a long time. How do you spell very?" Another time she asked Susie, "If you ran to a bench and lay down, what do you write? Laid down?"

Although these informal conferences punctuated the entire writing process, more formal and extended conferences tended to occur when drafts were completed. Often, for these conferences, children would leave their desks and go either to a conference table at the back of the room or to the rug in their reading area. These conferences took on many different forms and served many different purposes. Almost always, listeners would hear the story and then respond to the content. When Diane heard Susie's tale "Getting My Ears Pierced," Diane's first response was to exclaim, "I hope that sign 'Ears Pierced' is still at the mall when I go!"

When Trevor heard Birger's story, "A Shadow at the Fire," he, too, responded to the content. "When you said you ran into the house because you thought somebody was going to come and get you, I've had that feeling before. In the middle of the night, if your dog just turns over, you can get it."

Sometimes the listeners weren't quite able to understand their friends's text, and then the perplexed questions usually led the writer towards revision, as in this interchange between Diane and Susie:

Diane: Your story is called 'The Swinging Vines,' but what were the swinging vines? Did you go in little carts?

Susie: You mean you can't picture it?

Diane: No.

Susie: Oh, then I'll describe it more. (She writes herself a note to do this in the next draft.)

Oftentimes listeners diagnosed a problem in the story, and deliberately asked questions aimed at helping the writer repair that problem. After I listened to a conference between Birger and Gina, I asked them to tell me what questions were most helpful in a conference. Birger answered, "Like if it's a boring story about a tree fort, you could ask, 'What happened up there that was exciting? Did you ever get stuck up there?'"

Gina agreed, adding, "And sometimes they need to describe it more, so I get them to tell me how things looked, then I ask if they could fit that into their story." These transcripts show several conferences in which children seemed to ask leading questions. Notice, however, that the control of the conference never entirely leaves the writer's hands:

> Susie reads a story about a chickadee which came and stood on her outstretched hand, pecking at some seed which she held out for him. Susie read the draft to Diane and Amy.
>
> Amy: Good! What happens next?
>
> Susie: He looks at me, then quickly hops on my hand.
>
> Diane: How did it feel?
>
> Susie: It tickled...not like needles, just a nice, little hold.
>
> Diane: I've had that feeling before.
>
> Susie: I didn't realize, but I should add that in.
>
> Diane: I think it adds a lot to your story to tell that.
>
> Amy: Do you need any other help?
>
> Susie: Do you like the lead, or do you think I should start it when the chickadee lands on my hand?

Amy: I like it the way you have it. What were you thinking when you were standing there and the bird didn't come to you?

Susie: I was thinking it is too bad they don't understand about how I wasn't going to hurt them. I might add that, too. Thanks.

* * * * * *

Susie reads the story about meeting her grandparents in the Florida airport.

Diane: Do you like your story?

Susie: I don't know yet. I gotta go and see

Diane: and...

Susie: And I need help at the end of it.

Diane: (asking about the section which came at the end) How did you feel about seeing your grandparents?

Susie: I felt like running, but I don't know if I did. They looked so different and I was so glad to see them. Should I add that?

Diane: Yeah, maybe.

As I studied transcripts from the peer conferences, it seemed that Susie, more than most children, tended to tell writers about the problems she saw in their drafts. Instead of asking leading questions to solve the dilemma, she just raised the issue, leaving the writer to solve it later on. When Tricia wrote a first-person narrative about herself as a four-year-old, Susie reminded her that her main character would have to think like a four-year-old. "Remember," she warned, "they don't have as much worries as we older people do." Similarly, in a conference with Birger, Susie tried to explain to him the problem she saw in his draft. Birger began the conference by reading his draft. It went like this:

> "Come on, it's our turn for the raft." my cousin yelled. I was in Norway, and we'd just gotten off the raft, Joanne and Cecilie and me. Joanne is tall, has a good imaginative mind. She has short blonde hair and has a high temper...

Susie: I like it, but you tell about the raft and then stop and describe the people and then go back to the raft again. It's like you take one part and divide it up with description. But I do like how you describe people. Maybe you could...

Birger: (interrupting her) Put the description at the beginning?

Susie: Or tell it as part of the story. Like, Birger, if the fat lady was going up the stairs, describe how she was fat by showing how she goes up the stairs.

Birger: Yeah, so I could describe them at the same time I tell about the raft. (He looks at his paper.)

Susie: Oh, Birger, could I say one thing? You describe

> them, like you said 'she had an imaginative mind,' but could you describe it in a way that has to do with the story?

Birger returned to his desk, thanking Susie for her assistance. Our heroine nodded, unaware that she had not only given but received help. For although we billed these interactions as writing conferences, they were, in reality, language conferences. Skills in reading, listening, and speaking as well as in writing were used and developed through these childhood conferences. And although we assumed their purpose was to help the writer, in reality, the learning was collaborative and mutual. Both the writer and the listener helped each other.

## Chapter 14

## Writing for the Other in One's Self

"You can conference with yourself," Diane told me in fourth grade. She went on to explain:

> You just read the piece over to yourself and it's like there is another person there and you think thoughts to yourself of what is wrong with it.

Through writing for readers, Diane had learned to write with a reader perched on her shoulder. She continued:

> I say things others might ask me. Even though I know what happened, I like talk it over with myself. I might ask myself questions like, 'What are you going to do next?' and 'When are you going to end it?'

Diane was not alone. For every conference Susie had with a friend, she had dozens with herself. Like Diane, Susie often asked herself the questions others might have asked: "What will happen next?" "Where were you when this happened?" "How did you feel?" Like Diane, Susie had learned through interacting with others to interact with the other in herself.

"I don't think I have ever written for anybody except the other in one's self," Edmund Blunde has said, and many writers agree.

"...art has nothing to do with communication between person and person," Rebecca West says, "only with communication between different parts of a person's mind."

Art may have nothing to do with communication, but learning art has everything to do with it. Only by dialoguing with others did the children at Atkinson Elementary School learn that the writing process centers on a dialogue between writers and their writing.

There seemed to be an identifiable sequence to these children's developing ability to conference with themselves. In classrooms where teacher-child conferences were predictable...that is, for example, where teachers regularly began a conference by retelling the story or responding to content, and then proceeded to ask questions which the children could anticipate...children soon began to use the teacher-child conferences as a model for their conferences with each other. In turn, these peer conferences were internalized into children's first conferences with themselves. At first, children didn't ask their own questions of their text, but instead anticipated questions their friends would ask. As 6 year-old Greg said, "They'll still have questions, but at least I got rid of some of their questions."

Another first-grader, Laura, wrote:

WE PLAD A GAM

and then, as if anticipating the question "What game?" she exclaimed, "Oh, no! They're going to kill me." Soon Laura had sounded out and spelled the word "Aggravation," and her paged looked like this:

WE PLAD ~~A GAM~~ AGOUSHON

Laura continued writing. This time as she printed out her lines, she muttered, "I already told you why."

MI HOL FAMLE LIKES PENUT BUTTR

Across the table, another first grader chatted to himself as he forged ahead in a book called "All Abt Rbts." Finishing one page, Brad said, "And what do they eat?" Then he turned to the next page and wrote:

RABS AT CARS

(Rabbits eat carrots)

In second grade classrooms, writing continued to be a dialectical process, a "continual auditing of one's meaning" (I. A. Richards). Only now children sometimes showed more self-awareness. After 7 year-old Heather reread each page of her book, she said in a prim, matter-of-fact voice, "I'm having an individual writing conference with myself." She continued, "On each page I ask myself the questions the other kids would ask me." Opening her book to page 2, she said, "Here I wrote, I HAVE A HORSE. The kids would ask me if I ride it, so I'm going to add, I RIDE MY HORSE EVERYDAY UNLESS IT'S RAINING.

By fourth grade, it seemed that sometimes when children asked themselves questions, they were not only anticipating their audience's questions, but also generating their own questions. Instead of filling in gaps in the presentation of a subject alone, they were also filling in gaps in their understanding of it. They were not only writing to communicate, they were also writing to learn.

In April of fourth grade, Susie told me she was going to write a poem. "One time me and my father took a walk in the woods," she said, explaining what the poem would be about. "It was dim and our shoes made little balls of ice that went rolling down the hill." Then she wrote her first draft:

The sun shone down low in the sky.
Tiny snowballs, making go downhill.
Sun. Beautiful, beyond hill
Warm crisp air. My Father: wonderful,
Nice. Liking, like me, the best
Mine. Brightness, beauty, trees.
Peace all around.

Afterwards she had a little conference with herself. "Some of this they may not understand...the part about 'My father, liking, like me.'" Susie moved on to another draft, but before she wrote she said, "I'm trying to think of a special word for my dad. He's not like any other person..." Watching Susie, as she paused, her pen poised over the paper, it seemed she was experiencing the dialoguing which Rebecca West describes as "communication between different parts of a person's mind."

Susie wrote several more drafts of her poem, and none of them was quite right. Sometimes she spoke, often she was quiet. "You can write a poem saying about things," she said once, "you can tell about the feelings. But, like, the poem has to be the feelings, not just tell them." Then Susie turned back to her page and continued to reach for the words to convey--and to understand--the way she felt about her father and their shared moment. She read draft 7 to Diane:

The Wonderful Walk

Walking through the woods,
Dad and I.
Not worrying,
Not today.
Not talking of troubles but of
Smooth soft sparkling snow
And bright sun going down
Sharing the beauty
The Wonderful Walk.

"Final!" Diane announced triumphantly, her voice ringing with such clarity that it seemed the poem was her own.

But Susie paused, unsurely, and looked it over. "No," she said, "not yet."

"What don't you like about it?" Diane asked, perplexed, that added, "I love it."

"I'm not sure I'm getting the exact feelings I am trying to get..." Susie answered. Then, as if she was still reaching for the words to capture the moment, she said,

"...how clean, how white, and the sun shining. How good we felt."

It seemed crystal clear to me. Susie was not anticipating her friend's questions, she was not reaching for the words to convey that moment to an audience. Instead, she needed to find the right words so she could hold onto that moment for herself. She was not writing for an audience at all, but for herself.

"I do not write for anyone except for the other in oneself," Blunde said, and I think his words were true, also, for Susie.

## Chapter 15

## Concept Development

Researchers from Canada, United States, Australia and Great Britain have visited our research site and studied our data. They've all had questions--many questions--but it was Howard Gardner who asked the simplest, most difficult question of all: "What is Susie trying to do when she writes?" he asked. "What are her goals, her concepts of good writing?"

So far in this book, I've managed to dance around Gardner's question, touching only on the edges of it, mostly staying on safer grounds. I've dealt with more overt issues: "What was the environment in which Susie learned to write?" "What did Susie do as she wrote?" "How did these behaviors change?"

But Gardner's question has been omnipresent, for Susie's intentions were at the root of her activities. Because her writing involved an interplay of creation and criticism, the reasons she wrote involve both the forces for creation and the forces for criticism. Her writing was propelled by concern for making meaning...and it was guided and shaped by concepts of good writing. These concepts--the subject of this chapter--formed the schema which Susie built and rebuilt even while she operated within it.

For two weeks now, I've been on the verge of plunging into the amorphous, pulsing, omnipresent and invisible issue of Susie's concept development. I've stood on the brink of this chapter; and I've stood, and stood, and stood. I've cleaned my house thrice over, read more than I have in months, and written countless preparatory outlines. This morning I phoned Don Graves who has just completed a book on the study. "How's your chapter on concept development?" I asked, feigning lightness.

There was a long pause on the other end of the phone. Finally Don answered, "Well, to tell the truth, I haven't gotten to it yet."

George Kelly (1955) tells the story of how Locke sat down one evening to write, before retiring for bed, the Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Locke didn't finish the essay until 20 years later. That's how I feel about concept development.

The complexity of the topic is the only thing I'm sure of, and it's particularly complex when we're looking at older children. Whereas a 6 year-old's choices in writing are apt to arise out of a single value ("It should be longer;" "It should tell more excitement;" "It shouldn't go hippity hop all over the place"), the decisions of older children often emerge from a complex web of interacting criteria. Whereas a 6 year-old's thinking tends to be up-front and explicit, it's not unusual for an older child to say, "This feels wrong" and then proceed into a whole chain of revisions, leaving me to guess at the implicit concepts which guided their choices. Then, too, whereas 6 year-old's attend to their writing mostly when the text (and the researcher) are on hand, this was not so for Susie. For her, the interplay of creation and criticism might continue while she was riding her bike, chatting with her mother, or drifting off to sleep.

Like a detective, then, I was left searching for clues, building tentative answers to Gardner's question. And now as I prepare to write on Susie's concept development, I feel like cleaning the house once more.

Documenting concept development becomes all the more difficult because although every child in a classroom may have strived to achieve focus in their writing, focus probably meant something quite different to one child than to another. Every writer supplied her own, changing, often inarticulate meanings to "the qualities of good writing." And concept development becomes more amorphous still because these qualities did not necessarily operate as discrete values. Especially for third and fourth graders, many criteria-of-good-writing clustered into hierarchical arrangements, with some taking priority over others. For every child, both their concepts and their constellation of concepts were undergoing constant revision.

Psychologist George Kelly has helped me envision this by suggesting the metaphor of people as scientists. When I apply Kelly's metaphor to writing development, I see children--

miniature scientists--building theories of good writing, projecting them like transparent templets onto their evolving texts, then altering the texts or the theories so as to align one with the other. Just as researchers are guided by theoretical points-of-view, so, too, when Susie wrote her drafts, they were shaped by prior convictions about good writing. Just as researchers continually find new evidence which leads them to change their theories, so, too, Susie's work led her to continually refine her theories.

Concept development can be examined in terms of these overlapping, interconnected characteristics:

1. Correspondence between products and concept development.
2. Changes in the number of concepts in a child's repertoire.
3. Changes in the sophistication of these concepts.
4. Changes in concept density (the number of concepts mentioned at any one time, in reference to a single piece of writing).

These categories are provisional ones which we've projected onto the data. I'm grateful to Rebecca Rule who spent months studying concept development in the 16 subjects from our N.I.E. study. Her help in seeing patterns has been invaluable. But enough of house-cleaning.

Correspondence between Concepts and Products

It's not easy to claim definitive relationships between

Susie's breakthroughs in concept development and the quality of written products, for the quality of a piece of writing, like any art object, is debatable. Nevertheless, an interesting relationship may exist between Susie's products and her concepts. Rule describes this relationship, saying:

> The quality of Susie's writing varies tremendously, and it's not necessarily the best pieces of writing in which she makes the greatest breakthroughs in concept development. On the contrary, concept breakthroughs seem to happen on her best and on her worst pieces.

In fourth grade, Susie makes tremenous breakthroughs in her concepts when she discusses the "Swinging Vines" story--which surely is not one of her best. Rule explained to me her theory about this:

> It seems you have to write bad things to write good things. Often concepts develop through failures... in fact, the children's concepts seem to be developing no matter what their products turn out like. There's a lot of hidden concept development that goes on underground, and then when a writing topic comes up where that concept applies, the concept bursts out.

I mention Rules' hunches because they have a ring of truth for me. I suspect she's onto something, and look forward to seeing future research projects which ferret out the connections between products and concepts.

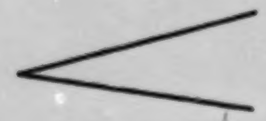
### Number of Concepts

I figured it was obvious--as Susie got older and more experienced, she'd develop more concepts of good writing. And indeed within the first weeks of third grade there was a dramtic leap ahead in the number of concepts which she cited. Whereas in her story about a clockmaker, Susie seemed to ask only "Is this correct?" and "What else should I add?" within just a few weeks she was suddenly referring to a large number of criteria. By November of that year, Susie was juggling one criteria against another, as is evident in this discussion of "The Big Fish:"

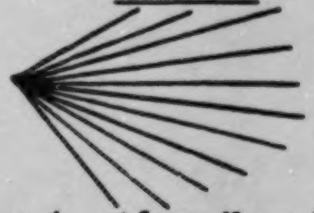
> I was thinking of what really happened and what would fit with the real thing and look good on paper.
>
> I'm trying to put all the stuff that happened onto the paper. I could write a big book about it and I wanted to just put down a tiny bit...trying to decide what little bit to put down!

Earlier, I illustrated the new tension that had entered Susie's writing process:

September



November



But then something curious happened. After November, the number of concepts in Susie's repertoire seemed to remain constant. In "The Big Fish" story, she talked about convention, information, action, focus, tone, organization, audience, truth, correctness...and in late fourth grade, she was still talking about these and only these concepts of good writing. Although Susie had continued to gain experience as a writer and to grow older, her concept development had not involved an increasing number but instead an increasing sophistication of concepts.

Looking back, I suspect the early increase in the number of Susie's concepts was not due to concept development at all but rather to changes in her classroom. Susie's clockmaker story was not written about a true event--therefore, she didn't ask "Is this true?" "What was the correct order in which things happened?" "Did I leave out any information?" I suspect that had she been writing a personal narrative, she would have applied these criteria to her writing. This is one reason I urge children to learn the writing process through personal narratives; unless they know elements of good fiction, they often do not impose constraints on their make believe stories and without constraints, there is little reason to revise. But a second change had also happened in Susie's classroom during those first few weeks. When Susie wrote the clockmaker story, she was not writing for real and responsive readers, but rather for a still unknown teacher. When she began to have real audiences, a host of new concerns entered her writing: her audience prized "action," and so Susie became concerned to choose exciting topics. Her audience wanted their questions answered, so Susie grew concerned to provide necessary information.

What I am suggesting is that the number of concepts a child has in her repertoire may relate less to their concept development and more to their context for writing. When children write about topics they know well, to interested and questioning audiences, the topics and the audiences create pulls on the writer, and this seems to lead even first graders to place high demands on their texts. After spending months studying concept development in our case-study subjects, grades 1-4, Rebecca Rule told me, "I have a hunch that most of the concepts are present in some simple form even with the very young writers. First graders care about information, organization, even point-of-view...and it's just a matter of developing sophistication in their understanding and use of these concepts."

## Sophistication

Although Susie's writing concepts did not increase dramatically in number, they did in sophistication. The general trend between third and fourth grade was that concepts which Susie first regarded as single undifferentiated "Goods" became increasingly differentiated and conditional.

When Susie was 8, action was a goal...later it became a range of options and Susie cautioned her friends, "You want action, but not too much action. You have to know when to put action in. If you have too much, people won't believe your story." And so it is with life. It seems so simple until we look closer and then the Absolutes don't seem so absolute, everything becomes relative, and decisions grow harder. One of Susie's young classmates said it well:

> The more you do in life, the harder it is to write. You're growing older...and as I grow older, I have to think about things more; I try to think about the details...and the writing gets harder.
>
> --Wendy Walsh, age 9

Wendy's words hang over the desk in our research office at the University of New Hampshire. I don't know if they are a source of comfort or of concern. These youngsters were only 9, yet already their once simple goals had become complex and relative, and they'd learned that decisions couldn't be made by rule but by balancing priorities; that is, by choice.

Rather than looking at each of Susie's many concepts, tracing the way they each changed, let's look closely at one, then, with less detail, at a sampling of others.

The changes in Susie's use of truth as a criterion for good writing are in some ways representative of the overall changes in her writing concepts. In early third grade, "telling the truth" was an Absolute Goal, taken literally. But when Susie tried to tell exactly what happened when she learned to fly, the resulting story was an odd one. It was as if Susie had crept over her memory-track with a magnifying glass, retelling each minute detail without any sense of the whole:

> "Susie, what are you doing?"
>
> "Just trying to fly."
>
> "Well, if you want to fly, go outside and do it, you're making too much noise."
>
> "But what if I start to fly and I float over to China?"
>
> "I wouldn't worry about that if I were you. I'll be down in the cellar if you need advice."
>
> "Okay, Dad, I'm going out now."
>
> "Hey Susie, your sister wants to come too...so come on in."
>
> "Okay, Dad, I'm coming on in now."

Susie's dogged pursuit of an exact 1:1 rendition of the remembered events seems to have prevented her from stepping back to create the setting (saying, for example "my father and I were talking in the living room"), to provide background information (for example, "I was only 6 years-old and determined to fly"), or to make transitions out of dialogue. Her attention was on the subject rather than on an interplay of subject/audience/text. Flower (1981) would probably call this writer-based prose; I called it retelling.

Soon Susie realized that a "true" retelling of her memory was not necessarily enough. In "The Big Fish," Susie's concern for truth vies with a concern for audience and for text. "I'm trying to think of...what would fit with the real thing and look good on paper," she said.

Six weeks later, however, when Susie wrote "Snuggling with Daddy," her first leads were reminiscent of "Learning to Fly:"

> Bang! There goes the hamper. He must be almost done with his shower. I can't wait. 'Jill, make room, Dad's coming out!'
>
> 'Nooo, I will when he comes out.'
>
> 'Well, here he comes. Hi Daddy!'

Then in later leads, Susie backs off from retelling and shows a new concern with representing. Whereas earlier in third grade Susie would probably have defended a draft of her writing as children so often do, saying, "But that is what really happened," by the middle of third grade she seems to realize that truth is contained not in events alone but in her re-creation of them. She wants to convey the whole rather than simply the parts. She brings an artistic distance to her writing. She writes:

> I snuggled deeper in the blanket. Something big was missing.

and then says, "I'm trying to figure out how, with the same feeling, I can bring my father to the sofa." She is in control; she is bringing rather than following her father to the sofa. With this new control comes a new ability to distance from the exact sequence of events. Susie ends up writing:

> I snuggle deeper in the blanket. I feel uneasy. Something big is missing. Then Daddy comes and lays down with me. He makes a pocket with his legs. I crawl in...

A year later, in fourth grade, Susie's concern for representing the whole of the event leads her not only to skip over some of the parts, but also to take poetic license with them. After writing the story about meeting her grandparents in the airport, she told me her favorite part was "true but not true."

> I liked the part when I was getting off the plane and I could tell by looking at Jill that she was as excited as me. I don't know if that happened, but I know she was excited and I wanted to put in that I looked at her and saw she was excited, to show how we felt...
>
> It's much better now, as I read it over I almost tell the exact feelings I felt then.

Susie's understanding of truth had become quite sophisticated. She reminded me of a quote from C.S. Lewis (1977):

> The real theme may be, and perhaps usually is, something that has no sequence to it, something other than a process and much more like a state or quality. Giantship, otherness, the desolation of Space. (p. 88)
>
> In life and art both...we are always trying to catch

> in our net of successive moments something that is not successive. (p. 89)

Susie had taken an important step. She had gained that sense of distance which may mark the separation from writing-as-play to writing-as-art. As Suzanne Langar wrote (1942, p. 215), "Sheer self-expression requires no artistic form." Langar explained her point, using music as an example:

> What is true of language is essential in music; music that is invented while the composer's mind is fixed on what is to be expressed is not apt to be music. (p. 240)

And so, by fourth grade, Susie's mind was no longer fixed on retelling the true events, but instead, on representing the Truth of the event. The "true thing" was no longer a given. Susie had learned her truth must be made.

Similar changes happened in Susie's understanding of focus. In early third grade, she and most of her classmates viewed focus as a quality which belonged to their subject rather than to their treatment of a subject. They interpreted focus as "having to choose one tiny thing to write about," and many children went to ridiculous lengths to reduce their topic, often shrinking out all possibility for combining contrasts into a single piece or for showing the evolution of their subject. It was not unusual, for example, for a first draft to begin with a child's pride over their tankful of fish and proceed from there to show the child's dismay as day-after-day another fish was found lying belly-up on the water's surface...and for the story to be reduced, draft-by-draft, until the final piece was an ineffective little story about a single fish, lying belly-up in the water.

But in time, Susie and many of her classmates realized that focus, like truth, was not an Absolute Goal, nor did it reside in the subject as much as in their treatment of the subject. By late fourth grade, Susie once again saw that she had the option to write about a chain of events, or about different aspects of a topic. In her glacier report, for example, Susie said, "You can tell different things about your topic, not just one thing. Like I put subtitles: the beginning of the glacier, the making of mountains, how glaciers melt..."

But now that focus was made rather than found, Susie had to develop ways to create unity, or thematic focus, in her pieces. Some concepts became more important. For example, she showed a new concern for building cohesion into her stories. And she used poetic license--small untruths--to weave the threads of her stories into a single fabric. In the piece about meeting her grandparents, Susie realized that all of a sudden, midway into her piece, she mentioned her mother's friend. Apparently the woman had been with Susie and her family all along, but hadn't been brought into the story until this late point. And so Susie crossed out all reference to the woman, explaining, "I didn't have her before in the story, so she can't just come in now." But when Susie noticed that her sister, too, hadn't entered the story until very late, she decided to write another draft. "See, in draft one, Jill was just suddenly there. So I'll put her in from the beginning."

Susie also uses feelings--or mood--to weave the parts of her stories into a cohesive whole. In "Snuggling with My Father," she was able to sacrifice telling every little event, in sequence, so long as she infused the story with a single feeling. And in a later story about a campfire, the one in which Susie had been troubled by changes in tone and said, "Up here has a different tone, explaining, than down here," it almost seemed that Susie's concern for cohesion and for mood were half-steps towards an understanding of thematic focus.

Over the two-year study, Susie's understanding of good endings--like her other concepts of good writing--loosened from a rigid sense of The Right Way and became an awareness of options. In early third grade, Susie was clear about endings: "They shouldn't just go off," she said, and indeed, her endings reminded me of a little knot, tied onto the end of each of her pieces:

| | |
|---|---|
| Learning to Fly | The next day I planned to try again and just keep on doing it until I flew. So I tried and tried and I'm still trying. |

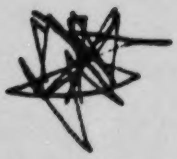
| | |
|---|---|
| Batting Is Fun | But when I play baseball with my sister I hit pop-flies...and I get out. But I'm still very proud of my batting. |
| The Big Fish | ...and I finally caught a big fish and I was satisfied. Wouldn't you be? |

A year later, when Susie wrote about falling out of a bunk-bed, she said, "I usually have a little line to end it, like "I'll never sleep in that bunk-bed again!" Then she said, "I think, for a change, I won't put that in." Instead she ended the piece with her mother consoling her from the fall. For a while, Susie tended to end her stories with either a "little line" or with going to bed, arriving home, reaching her destination...some event which would bring closure to the piece. But at the end of fourth grade she realized her options were broader still. "Endings can leave them hanging," she said. "Usually they don't, but they can." Once again, Susie had learned there are no hard and fast rules, and that the rightness of any choice depends on a multitude of factors.

## Density of Concepts

Earlier in this book, we saw Susie's writing process move from a linear sequence of steps towards a vibration of processes. By late fourth grade, the only diagram of the writing process which seemed applicable to Susie's process is the careful one drawn by Pulitzer Prize winning writer,

Donald M. Murray (1981):



This diagram, I think, not only illustrates Susie's process of craft, but also her concepts of good writing. Whereas in early third grade (and, I suspect, even more so in first and second grade), Susie probably considered qualities of writing serially, one at a time; by fourth grade she seemed to juggle multiple criteria, and her writing became a vibration of simultaneous, often competing, criteria. Researcher Rule, who refers to this as an increasing density of concepts. points out that it's telling to realize that when Susie talked about a piece of writing in early third grade, she usually referred to two or three concepts of good writing...by fourth grade, within a single bit of talk about a single piece of writing, she often mentioned between seven and 10 concepts.

Flower (1981) likens the writer to "a very busy switchboard operator trying to juggle a number of demands on her attention and constraints on what she can do." Flower continues, saying "As a dynamic process, writing is the act of dealing with an excessive number of simultaneous demands or constraints." Her observations match my own.

Arnheim ( 1969) refers to the same "organization of tensions" in this important passage:

> The artist is constantly faced with the problem of how

> to develop the part in terms of the whole...The artist works out partial entities, acting upon each other dialectically. An interplay of interferences, modifications, restrictions and compensations leads gradually to the unity of and complexity of the total composition...The total result, obtained through successive operations, presents itself as a marvel of organized complexity.

Just as Susie's process became, in time, less systematic, articulate and neatly packaged, so, too, her concepts of good writing became less absolute, less definable, less discrete. "This feels wrong," she'd say, and both the process which followed and the reasons for it were a whirl of shifting, interconnected processes and values.

## Chapter 16

## The Reading Connection

They say it's the nature of case-study research--that only as a project ends does it become clear what might have been. They tell me I should feel good about my regrets, about my "If only I'd..." feelings. These, I am told, should be written up--not as a *Regrets Column*, but as *Suggestions for Future Research*. And I suppose I can forgive myself for not getting baseline data onto videotape, or watching Greg as closely as Susie, or documenting my informal discussions with the teachers. But it was not out of ignorance that I ignored the reading-writing connection. It was out of spite.

For years, I'd watched teachers spend two hours a day on the teaching of reading, and barely any time on the teaching of writing. Those precious morning hours--prime time, we called them--inevitably went to reading and mathematics. If there was any writing at all, it was done just before the Halloween party or when the film projector broke down or during the last minutes before afternoon bus call. Then, too, each year I'd seen our language arts budget go almost exclusively for reading textbooks and kits. There never seemed to be money left over for postage stamps, italic pens, or book-binding supplies. At the University of New Hampshire, I learned Don Graves shared my dismay at the imbalance between the basics. Don had just completed a study funded by Ford Foundation on the status of writing in our country. These were some of his findings (1976):

> A review of public investment at all levels showed that for every dollar spent on the teaching of writing, a hundred or more are spent on the teaching of reading.
>
> A random survey of 36 universities which prepare teachers showed that 169 courses were offered in reading, 30 in children's literature...and only 2 focused on the teaching of writing.

Although both Don and I had backgrounds in reading, we'd come to view reading as our nation's neurosis. We agreed with Moffett (1973):

> Reading...has swelled out of reasonable proportions, to its detriment as well as to the detriment of other activities...It crowds out those very activities that it desperately needs. It dominates the curriculum, at the expense of itself. (p. 18)

In retrospect, I think it was because I was angry at reading that I acted as if reading and writing were separate, even competing processes. Writing I saw as active and expressive, reading as passive and receptive. Because our research was on writing, I didn't make a point of documenting the interface between reading and writing. I assumed they were each based on separate skills. Of course, I was wrong. Wronger even than I secretly realized.

I was wrong, firstly, because there was no way I could watch writing without watching reading. While composing, children read continually. They read to savor the sounds of their language, they read to see what they had written, they read to regain momentum, they read to re-orient themselves, they read to avoid writing. They read to find gaps in their work, they read to evaluate whether the piece was working, they read to edit. And they read to share the work of their hands. My research colleagues counted as a 6 year-old reread his work 27 times before he'd finished writing one sentence. Another researcher who has examined our data (1982) calculates that some children spent as much as 30 percent of writing time reading.

Then, too, I was wrong because even when children weren't reading, they were using and developing skills which are traditionally assigned to the domain of reading. As Susie and her classmates wrote, rewrote and conferenced, they selected and re-selected their main idea, organized their supporting details, adjusted and defended their sequence. They reached towards interference, they discovered cause and effect, they developed and challenged conclusions. In a sense, everything which happened during writing time relates to skills which are traditionally viewed as reading skills.

Consider Birger, who told me this in fourth grade:

> In every story I write, I'm always thinking,

> 'is this one story?' 'Is this two stories?'
>
> Like in one story, I was going to write about getting 20 cents worth of bottles adding up to a dollar, but my bike got stuck in a wheat field and I dropped the bottle story and stayed with the wheat.

Birger would have been surprised to hear that he was developing a skill which is usually taught through reading kits and workbooks. Like Birger, first and second grade writers searched for their main idea. Some tried hard to write titles which matched their stories; others divided their writing into chapters and tried to make the chapters "go together."

Because the 6 year-olds wrote on pages stapled together into a crude sort of book, usually putting just a few lines on each page, these children often re-ordered their statements, thereby developing another reading skill: sequence. Once I watched 6 year-old Sharon listen to her classmate's story, "My Trip to the Football Game." It wound its way back and forth between the bus ride:

> THERE WERE OVER FIFTY BUSES

and the game:

> THE PATRIOTS AND THE JETS PLAYED. THE SCORE WAS 55 to 21.

then back to the bus:

> THERE WAS A BATHROOM ON THE BUS

and then to the game again:

> WE SAW A MAN WITH A PUMPKIN ON HIS HEAD. THE POLICEMAN

MADE US THROW OUR COKE IN THE GARBAGE.

When Greg finished reading his story, Sharon shook her head and said firmly, "It wasn't about one thing, Greg. It went hippity-hop from one thing to the next...It's like you went to sleep and had a crazy dream." Then, with the teacher's help, Greg and Sharon reconstructed the day's events--and the book--in correct sequence.

During writing time, children also learned to read texts in search of unanswered questions, gaps in logic, and missing information. In Mrs. Currier's room, I watched Jeremy read Diane's second draft of "Falling into the River." He reread it several times, then said, "Di, I gotta question about this part."

> I landed in the water with a big splash. 'Wendy, I yelled, 'get me out of here!'
>
> Wendy came giggling from behind a tree. She pulled and pulled and tried to get me out of it. Then SPLASH. She fell on top of me. She crawled out of the water and started pulling again. This time I came loose from the water and got hauled to shore.

"What exactly made you stick?" Jeremy asked. Poor Jeremy; his question had been a serious one, but it struck both Diane and me so terribly funny, and we laughed so hard that soon Jeremy was laughing too. Finally Diane recovered enough to answer.

"Well," she said, blushing. "It's hard to explain;

it's like, well, the water was pushing me down." And she sprawled herself onto the floor, trying with her hands to illustrate the effect of the water current. The entire episode was enormous fun for the children--they would have been startled to hear it had been a drill on reading comprehension!

Children not only searched for gaps in each other's texts, but they also examined their own. Seven year-old Greg announced to me, "When I read my stories, sometimes I see that my brilliant ideas turn out to be a disaster." I asked what he meant. For an answer, the youngster opened his homemade book to a marked page and read,

> I LOOKED AT MY FATHER'S COLLECTIONS. AFTER THAT WE LEFT.

"See, it's a disaster," Greg said. "It should go in the trash can. It goes wicked fast through it, but it doesn't tell what we saw in the collections." Then Greg took hold of his pencil and, with arrows and cross-outs, began to repair the page. After a few minutes he said, "It's better now."

> I LOOKED AT MY FATHER'S COLLECTIONS. I SAW BUTTONS, COINS, STAMPS, SPIRALS THAT MY FATHER COLLECTED.

"I went over it and thought of all the questions I could get out," Greg said. "The collections: what are they? what kinds of collections? The kids will have questions still, but less than they would have." Greg added, "At least I got rid of some of the questions."

On every page of my observational notes, there are more anecdotes like these. And everytime I go into classrooms now where writers are revising and conferencing on their work, I am again reminded that writing and reading are inseparable. A few weeks ago I brought Professor Bernice Cullinan, a leading figure in the field of children's literature, to visit writing process classrooms in New York City. It was good for me to see writer/readers through her eyes, for everywhere she turned, she saw more reading. In most of the classrooms, children had learned that after reading a friend's story in peer-conference, the first task was to reconstruct what they had learned from it. And so we watched first grade writers, with text in hand, listening as a friend recited their story, following along in the text to be sure no details had been forgotten and no information had been misconstrued. What a sociable way to practice recall skills!

Then, too, Dr. Cullinan and I also watched as a 6 year-old sounded out TUXEDO. He worked with the word for several minutes; putting letters onto his page, reading them back, asking a friend for help with the /u/ sound, rereading his letters and again isolating and repeating the sounds he needed. The classroom teacher joined us as we watched. "No workbook could ever ask a first grader to do this much drill on sounds," she said, "but my writers do it all the time."

When youngsters build tree-forts or block structures, they surprise us with their willingness to sustain work for many hours, even days. So, too, when children build their own texts, they break the child labor laws.

Yes, I was wrong to view the two processes as separate. Wrong because writing involves reading, and because it reinforces and develops skills traditionally viewed as reading skills. And I was also wrong because writing can generate a stance towards reading which, regretfully, is rarely conveyed through most reading programs. When children are makers of reading, they gain a sense of ownership over their reading. As we've seen again and again, owners are different from tenants.

So often, in our efforts to teach youngsters to respect books and to read "correctly," we've taken reading out of children's hands. Reading has become less like romping about in one's own back yard and more like those stifled, pained visits to a grandparent's house. Youngsters are taught to be polite guests; they're not to ask rude questions, to blurt out their uninformed opinions, or to take off their white gloves. In most reading programs, there's rarely an opportunity for children to ask questions of a text. Instead questions are pre-written, and they are not directed at the text at all, but at the reader. Children, well schooled at detecting their teacher's wishes and at decoding the messages implicit in our methods, have probably gotten messages like these from our reading programs:

> Texts are to be respected and remembered. It's your fault if you do not recall what was said.
>
> The printed word is final, and unquestionable.
>
> If you read well, the text should mean the same thing to you as it means to me.
>
> These texts have been written by very great people. You are just a child and not in a position to pass judgments on your superiors.

No wonder we mistakenly view reading as a passive and receptive act--the reading we teach in our schools often verges on being just that! In an important and recent article on critical reading, Newkirk (1982) suggests that too often our reading programs are geared towards teaching children deference rather than critical thinking:

> Even students who can accomplish the important comprehension tasks such as locating the main idea, summarizing and drawing inferences are controlled by the written language if they must accept the writing on its own terms, if they lack the power of question the integrity of the texts before them. Lacking this power, they are only deferentially literate; they are polite readers. Like good guests, they do not ask impertinent questions.

One of the greatest contributions writing can make to reading is to demythologize the printed word. I refer again to Newkirk (1982):

> All of us, to some degree, stand in awe of written language...Any reading program must acknowledge this potential of written language to intimidate, to bully the reader into submission. (p. 1)
>
> Writing programs can make texts less imposing. By creating their own texts, students can begin to view written language as the result of human choices and not as something fixed and authoritative. (p. 2)

Newkirk's observations strike home for me. My writing and research have certainly made me a more cautious and critical consumer of research. The change probably comes, in part, because I have a research base against which to test what I read, asking "Does this match what I know?" But I think the change comes also from a more humble reason. I know that behind my own texts there is an emperor with no clothes on. I know, as no one else could, the gaps in this text, the compromises I have made, the goals I haven't met. And so now I view those beautiful, finished looking books and journals differently. They are less imposing to me, they seem less final and complete. I can see the writer behind the text.

Seven year-old Greg seems to have learned the same thing. He said it this way:

> Before I ever wrote a book, I used to think there was a big machine, and they typed a title and then the machine went until the book was done.

> Now I look at a book and I know a guy wrote it and it's been his project for a long time. After the guy writes it, he probably thinks of questions people will ask him and revises it like I do, and xeroxes it to read to about six editors. Then he fixes it up, like how they say.

Greg and I are both learning how reading is made. And we both read differently because we now have an insider's view of reading.

When writers question a test, they do not only question it critically, to evaluate whether it works. They also examine it as a fellow craftsman, asking "I wonder why the writer chose the lead he did?" or "I wonder if these characters come from the author's life?" Because writers are makers of reading, they have a reason to look closely at a text. Because I am in the midst of buying a car, I've suddenly developed a new interest in the ever-present cars which traverse my world each day. I notice the differences between the Datsun and the Toyota, and wonder whether the Subarus have front-wheel drive. Similarly, when children view themselves as authors, they approach texts with the consciousness of "I am one who needs to know how texts are made." Writing gives them a new reason to connect with reading. Birger came into school one morning, saying, "Last night I read a book called, And Then Again, Maybe I Won't. I can't figure out why he called it that--the author only used those words one time in that whole book, and it was at the end."

Susie often mentioned descriptions she found in her reading books, reminding me of Victor Pritchett's comment, "I read for the pleasure of learning how to write."

Over the last few months, Susie's fourth grade teacher and other writing process teachers with whom I've worked are telling me they're extending their students' interest in reading by encouraging them to held peer-conferences in reading, just as they do in writing. "The questions are almost the same," the teachers tell me, "and the more children look at their reading, the better they do in their writing." These are some of the questions the children may be asking in reading conferences:

About the Lead

Does the author make me want to read on? How does the author do this?

How's this lead like the ones I've been writing? How's it different?

When I read the lead, what do I expect will follow in the book?

Does the book begin at the beginning of the story, or does it begin somewhere else, like in a flashback?

About the Characters

Which of the characters seem most real? Why?

What sections of the book especially helped me to know the characters? Can I learn from these sections?

Do all the characters seem to work?

Does the author tell me about them, or show them in action?

Do the characters change through the story?

About the Point-of-View

Who tells the story?

Why did the author decide to do it this way?

How else might it have been done?

Does this way work?

Can I learn anything from what the author's done?

About the Plot

Can I map the sequence of events?

Is this story mostly events, or mostly characters, or what?

How does the writer skip forward in time? Backward?

How does the writer make things speed up or slow down?

About the Ending

Does the ending relate back to the beginning?

Is it a summing-up ending? Should there be one?

Can I put the book down now...does it feel like The End?

I confess, when Mrs. Currier told me about the new trade books she has ordered for her classroom, about her reading conferences and the bridges she and the children are building between reading and writing, I wanted to say, "Why, oh why didn't you do all that when I was there to document it?" But of course I cannot blame her for her being slow to see the connections between reading and writing. I, too, was slow to learn what the children were showing me.

## Chapter 17

## Reading, Writing and a Glacier Report

The more I delve into children's writing, the more I want to study the connections between reading and writing. The interface between them, I believe, is the research territory of the future. I'm not surprised that even before final reports were in from our study, Graves had begun a follow-up project, examining the connections between reading and writing. His study, like most of the research relating reading and writing processes, will focus on 4-6 year-old children. This is not surprising; progress is rapid for these little ones, and both reading and writing are externalized so much that they're easy to see, to videotape, to document. But there is another territory which needs to be explored. What are the links between reading and writing for children who can already decode and encode words? What are the relationships between reading and writing for youngsters like Susie, Birger, Greg and Diane?

I have a hunch that if we replayed Susie's third and fourth grade years, we'd find strong similarities between her reading and writing processes. When Susie was a pixie-like 8 year-old, both the products and the process of her writing resembled a chain. X ⟶ X ⟶ X ⟶ X There was relatively little back and forth movement, and there was little ability to distance from a text, to ask questions of it. Unless Susie stumbled over a troublesome spelling, her attention tended to follow her pencil steadily down the page until The End, whereupon writing was over. This seemed typical for third-grade writers who'd gained fluency with print yet didn't understand the craft of writing. I suspect that this third grade plateau characterizes reading development as well as writing development. Once young readers gain fluency, their reading probably resembles Susie's chain-like writing. Their eyes, like Susie's hand, move forward, one word: the next, the next the next, until The End, whereupon reading is over. The tragedy is that too often reading development, like writing development, doesn't move beyond this point.

When I read, I ask questions, I push forwards and backwards. "What does this imply about that earlier passage?" "How do these parts connect?" "Do I agree?" "Have I met this character before in this story?" I manipulate the text in order to build meaning. Sometimes the interplay of creation and criticism happens line by line, sometimes the momentum of one force overtakes the other for awhile, but both remain. The craft of reading, like the crafts of writing, science and art, involves an interplay of forces, a dialogue of perspectives.

We've seen this interactive quality develop in Susie's writing, but did it carry over into her reading? I suspect it did. Curriculums are divided into separate subjects, people are not. But my suspicions are based not only on common sense, but also on a glimpse I was given, late in fourth grade, of Susie's reading. It was Susie's first social studies report which provided me with this window onto her reading. The evolution of that report is a story worth telling, and so in this chapter, my discussion of her reading is embedded into a larger discussion of her first serious expedition into content-area writing.

Every spring for years and years, the fourth graders at Atkinson Elementary School wrote "New Hampshire State Reports." These reports had become a tradition--even the dittoed guide sheets enumerating items to be included were tradition. And so I was surprised when Mrs. Currier mentioned over lunch that she'd been rethinking the state reports. "They seem to go against everything we've been teaching," she said. When I looked over the guide sheets, I agreed. How could children write with detail, focus and voice if they were required to tell about the state bird, flower, rivers, mountains, minerals, products, and history? How could children conference, draft and revise if the only feedback they received was an autopsy report on the finished work?

That Spring at Atkinson Elementary School, traditions were broken...and begun. It started one morning in early March when the air smelled like Spring and the playground was dotted with jackets and hats. Mrs. Currier gathered her children together to build a flow chart of "Things about New Hampshire." From this, the children chose topics they cared about for their reports: the white-tailed deer, granite quarried, the Merrimack River. Susie chose glaciers.

That was Friday. On Monday we were dismayed to find children coming to school with reams of notes and, in some instances, finished reports. Following tradition, they'd gone to the town library on Saturday morning and copied the encyclopedia. They felt proud of themselves; grown up, as if they'd gone through initiation rites, as perhaps they had. Debbie later told me:

> I didn't know how to do it; I had lumps in my throat, butterflies in my stomach. This was the first time I'd done a real report. They said, 'put down the important facts,' so I did, out of the encyclopedia: people, places, dates, Indians and wars.

The children's weekend efforts became a lesson for Mrs. Currier. Clearly she'd have to begin again, this time helping students transfer the writing process into report writing. Her first step was to put content-area writing into a time slot which had once been reserved for writing process. "It's no different," she assured the children. And indeed, writing was still stored in folders, only now the front covers had a space for Bibliography, and the back covers, for Vocabulary Words. Writing time still began with a workshop for drafting and conferencing...only now, children were reading and note-taking as well. Writing time still ended with a meeting, only now the nutshell lessons were on finding resource material, bibliographies, mapping and note-taking.

In one of these mini-lessons, Mrs. Currier asked children to pretend they were each researching bird migration, and together the class went through the steps of selecting resource material and taking notes. Mrs. Currier had collected books on the topic, including a primary-level book and an encyclopedia. "Which would you read first?" she asked and in the discussion which ensued, children learned to read simpler books first, gaining a grasp of their subjects before they tackled denser texts. Then Mrs. Currier suggested students leaf through the book, becoming familiar with the topic. After that the class brainstormed questions they hoped to answer, filling the blackboard with these. From this collection, each student--and the teacher--selected a few questions. While the teacher wrote her questions on top of sections of the blackboard, the students put theirs on top of sheets of yellow paper. "The next thing we do is we read until our heads are full," Mrs. Currier told the class. After a few minutes of reading out loud from the primary-level book, she stopped and the class recounted what they'd learned, then filed relevant bits of information under the appropriate question-headings.

With this lesson behind her, Susie began her research on glaciers. "My father went to the library and got some books," she said, "and at home I started reading them. I wanted to find some questions that were interesting."

I remembered observing children read reference books, invariably it seemed they began at the first page and read along until they grew tired. And so I was surprised by Susie's description of the reading she did at home.

> In my book there are different sub-titles and I flipped through them until I found one that was interesting. Sometimes you have to read two parts to understand one, so I read them both and tried to see if it was a good and important part.
>
> I read 'How Geologists Study' and my father said I could use that as a question for my report or not; it was up to me. So I called up Diane and we talked and decided it wasn't that good of an idea. It's not that much about glaciers.

Clearly, Susie was reading with a purpose, with a selective eye, steering her way through the text rather than being bound to a straight-forward linear progression. I was amazed at the apparent parallels between her writing and her reading, but Susie meanwhile continued to chatter away, oblivious to my response.

> So then I kept on reading and I decided to do a part on ice crystals so I wrote a note on the top of the page to remember to do that. I was going to take notes on the melting of the glacier after I did the

crystals, but I am doing the crystals first and
I'll rearrange my notes after.

Reading, for Susie, was far from passive. Rather than simply receiving a text, Susie was actively forming structures, building and shaping her meaning. Her reading was inseparable from learning. "Whatever else learning may be," Gordon Allport wisely said, "it is clearly a disposition to form structures." By late fourth grade, that "disposition to form structures" had become second nature for Susie.

In school, as Susie continued to gather and organize information about glaciers, she moved easily between reading and writing. To me it seemed she relied all the while on strategies and thinking skills I'd observed in her writing. Whereas I'd often watched her planning ahead in her writing, now I watched as she surveyed the text before her, read, made predictions, and organized her attack. The executive function which had given her flexibility and control in writing seemed crucial to her reading, for as she proceeded through books, she monitored and directed her processes, shuttling between reading/rereading/planning/recalling/questioning/reading/talking/writing...

I remember one morning watching Susie "read" about glaciers. She began by scanning five pages of notes she'd collected. Each of the pages represented a different sub-topic:

Where do glaciers come from?

Are they going to be around a lot again?

How many are left?

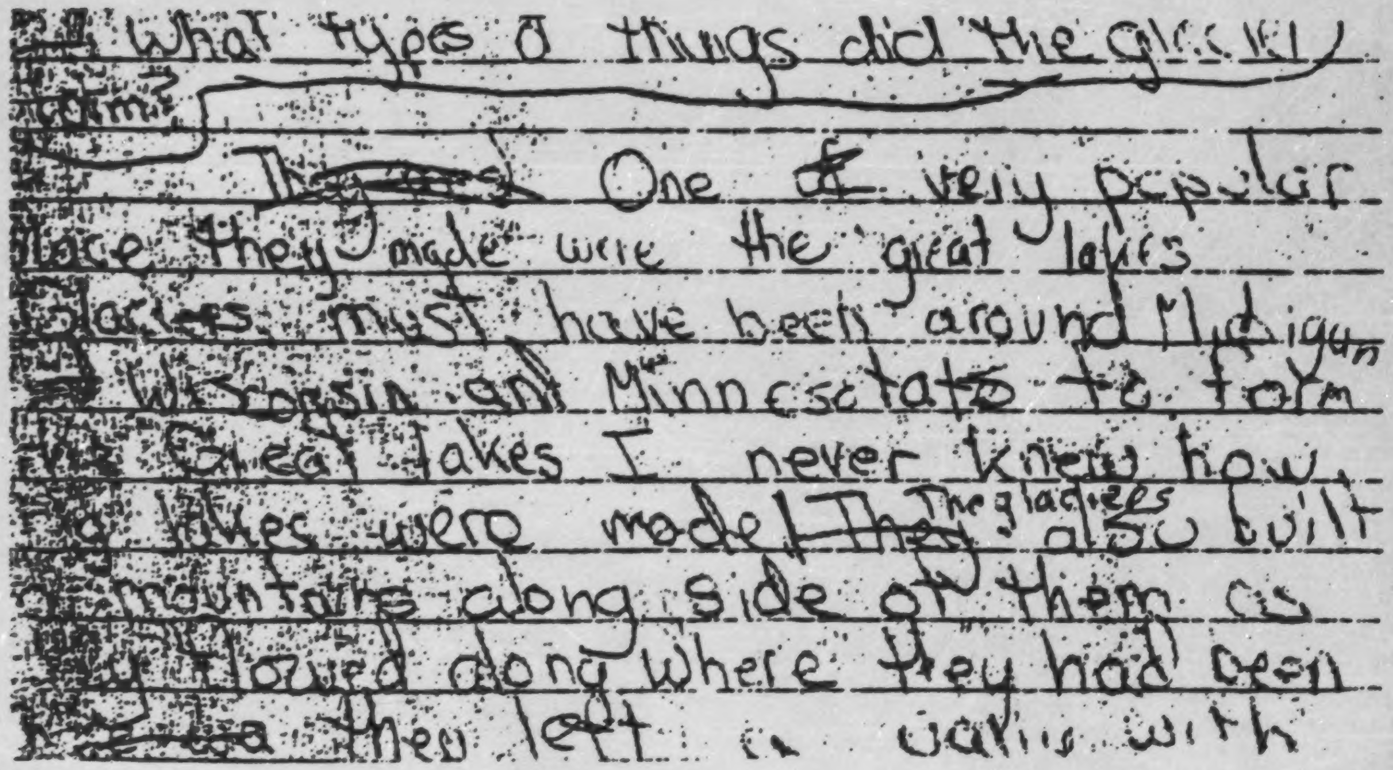
Where did they start forming?

Other?

Susie put down her notes and headed to the bookshelf at the back of the classroom. She found a reference book, searched through it, then returned that book to the shelf. A second book was located, and this time Susie returned with it to her desk. Putting on her newly acquired glasses, Susie began to look over the book. Page 868 must have contained what she was looking for--Susie read the entire page, slowly. Then she added to her notes:

> Piedmont glaciers are rare. They are valley glaciers that move onto a plain. Alaska has a piedmont.

"I'm not sure what information I should get next," Susie mused. "Should I look up the ice age--they said so in the book, that it relates." And so, with me on her trail, Susie headed off for the school library, found several books and used the index in one to locate a section on the ice age. Again she returned to her desk. This time when she looked up from reading, she said to Diane, "I gotta find something on the map, want to help?" And so the two girls pulled the United States wall-map down from its roller, and chatted as they surveyed the map. When Susie returned, she explained to me, "I wanted to see where the Great Lakes are and I am going to add a little about them, because the glaciers formed them." Because she couldn't find an appropriate place in her notes to file the new information, Susie added a new category:



[illegible] What types of things did the glaciers
form?
~~They~~ One ~~of~~ very popular
place they made were the great lakes
Glaciers must have been around Michigan
Wisconsin and Minnesota to form
the Great Lakes I never knew how
the lakes were made! ~~They~~ The glaciers also built
mountains along side of them as
they flowed along where they had been
~~[illegible]~~ a then left a valley with

Susie returned to her reading. After five minutes, she added another category into her notes, this time putting just the page number of the reference book beside the heading. "If I want to do detailed stuff later, I can remember the page." Again Susie read, and again she returned to her notes. She scanned each page of them, inserting new bits of information here and there throughout them, and occasionally crossing-out sections which didn't fit. Mostly she worked quietly, but at one point she said, "I was thinking in the first section I didn't explain what a glacier is so people know--I'm telling how it melts without telling what it is."

In this sort of way, Susie continued reading and writing for another 15 minutes. Finally, she leaned back in her chair. "I might start a draft now and it'll help me decide what should go first." But writing workshop was over for that day, and Susie had yet to learn what was in store for her.

During our lunch times, Mrs. Currier and I had kept each other updated on the children's progress. Although Susie was just approaching her first draft, others were well into theirs. That morning Mrs. Currier brought the drafts to lunch and bemoaned, "So many are still not writing in their own words!" She read sections to me and as we talked, we realized the children didn't know what it meant to write in their own words. They thought they were doing just that.

For example, whereas Greg's book had said, "The dappled fawn lay in the leaves," he'd proudly written it, "The spotted fawn lay in the leaves." Even Birger, one of the better writers in the room, said to me:

> I decided to make it in my own words so I found out what the words I didn't know meant. I looked it up in a dictionary. Now I'm putting it into my own words, not using the big words.

As Mrs. Currier and I read over the papers and reflected on what the children were telling us, we realized what was missing: that nebulous, all important quality writers call "voice."

The next morning began with a class meeting. "We've always said that in order to write well, writers need to know and care about their subjects," Mrs. Currier began. "That's true for report writing, too. It's now enough to read two books and then write them up. You have to feel like an expert on your topic." To give children this sense of personal authority, she suggested they teach each other what they knew. This was a new form of peer-conferencing, and so she suggested the class try it as a group first.

And so tow-headed Birger, a little embarrassed and very pleased, went to the front of the classroom and taught his classmates about squirrels. He described their food, enemies, and appearance, but the thing which most intrigued his classmates was a curious statement he made about squirrels squeaking when they're too cold. When Birger's lecture was finished, he called on children for questions:

Diane: Does the squirrel squeak when he's sleeping?

Birger: Only if his body temperature goes below 40 degrees and that saves his life.

Diane: He automatically squeaks?

Birger: Yeah.

Nicole: Where did you get your information from, one book?

Birger: The first part was from a little encyclopedia and the middle from Young Wildlife.

Liz: Do you think when he squeaks it is a natural instinct?

Birger: They didn't say...

Brad: How does the squeak make the body temperature go up?

Birger: I'm not sure. I'll find out.

Soon the children had divided into clusters and were teaching each other what they knew. On the rug in the library area, Amy, the class artist, told Susie and Diane about the red fox. "He is red and has a white chin and black behind the ears and on the feet. In the winter, you know how dogs have pads on their feet? Well, in the winter the fox have deep soft fur on their feet and in the cold, they take their soft tails and wrap around them."

Diane, already an expert on the mating habits of beavers, seemed unappreciative of Amy's description. Getting right to the point, she asked, "How do they mate?"

"They mate for life. They just pick any fox that comes along...the babies are called kits."

"Baby beavers are called the same thing," Diane responded and for awhile Susie listened while her friends compared animals.

When it was Susie's turn, she explained glaciers briefly. then asked for questions. Because Diane's interest in mating habits wasn't applicable to this topic, Amy led the questioning, "How do scientists tell how old the glacier is?" she wanted to know.

"It's like the rings of a tree. Every year the snow on top gets dirty so it forms layers," Susie answered.

"How do the glaciers move along?"

Susie answered the question, "By pressure, pushing it out," but she wasn't satisfied with her answer. The next day before school she told her friends, "I was talking with my father about how the glaciers move and my father said it's the great weight, it's just like a river. The top moves first. When I write I may tell it's like a river, and they'll get an idea what it's like."

As well as giving children voice over their information, these peer conferences were providing a time for rehearsal. Listen to Greg's discussion of his topic:

> I'm going to write, 'A group of white-tailed deer are in a group, the mother leaves and she sits

down,' and then I'm going to say, 'she can feel some kicks. She decides to rest.'

Then I'll have a new paragraph and say that she goes to sleep to rest and she wakes up in her napping and she has a fawn.

Then I'll tell how, in a new paragraph, it is like the fawn's first time trying to stand up. I didn't read about that in a book.

In a book I read the first time she, the mother, has one fawn and then the next time she has twins And usually when she has had a baby, I didn't really find it out, but I guess they don't have a father. I never read about the babies' father in a book and I was wondering.

I know the white-tailed buck takes one doe, then maybe three weeks later he'll take another. He's not like most deer with lots of girls, he only takes one at a time.

After a few days of teaching each other their topics, Mrs. Currier made another suggestion. She asked children to clear their desks of all their notes, and to take out a single sheet of yellow paper. "Try writing some leads, and then a draft, without looking at your notes. Later you can go back and insert missing information, or if this doesn't work you can later write a draft from your notes."

Although initially there were groans of resistance, children quickly realized that their reports improved once they were truly written in the writer's own words. These are a few of the leads children used:

> A beam of sunlight shown through the crack in the red foxes den. The fox opened his eyes just a slit and looked around his den. It was a cozy stump...
>
> -Amy
>
> The boat started with a sputter as I, Celia Thaxter, and my family left for the Isles of Shoals...I couldn't wait to see the island we would live on. Nearer and nearer we came until...
>
> -Melissa
>
> It's very easy to find mica in your front yard because it's very shiny, and when the sun shines, it glitters. When you are looking for mica you won't find it alone. There is mica in other rocks, like granite.
>
> -Vinny

But far more important than the quality of the writing was the children's new investment in it. "It's mine," they'd say, "It's not like I could copy this from a book."

This is Susie's first draft, abandoned midway:

# Glaciers

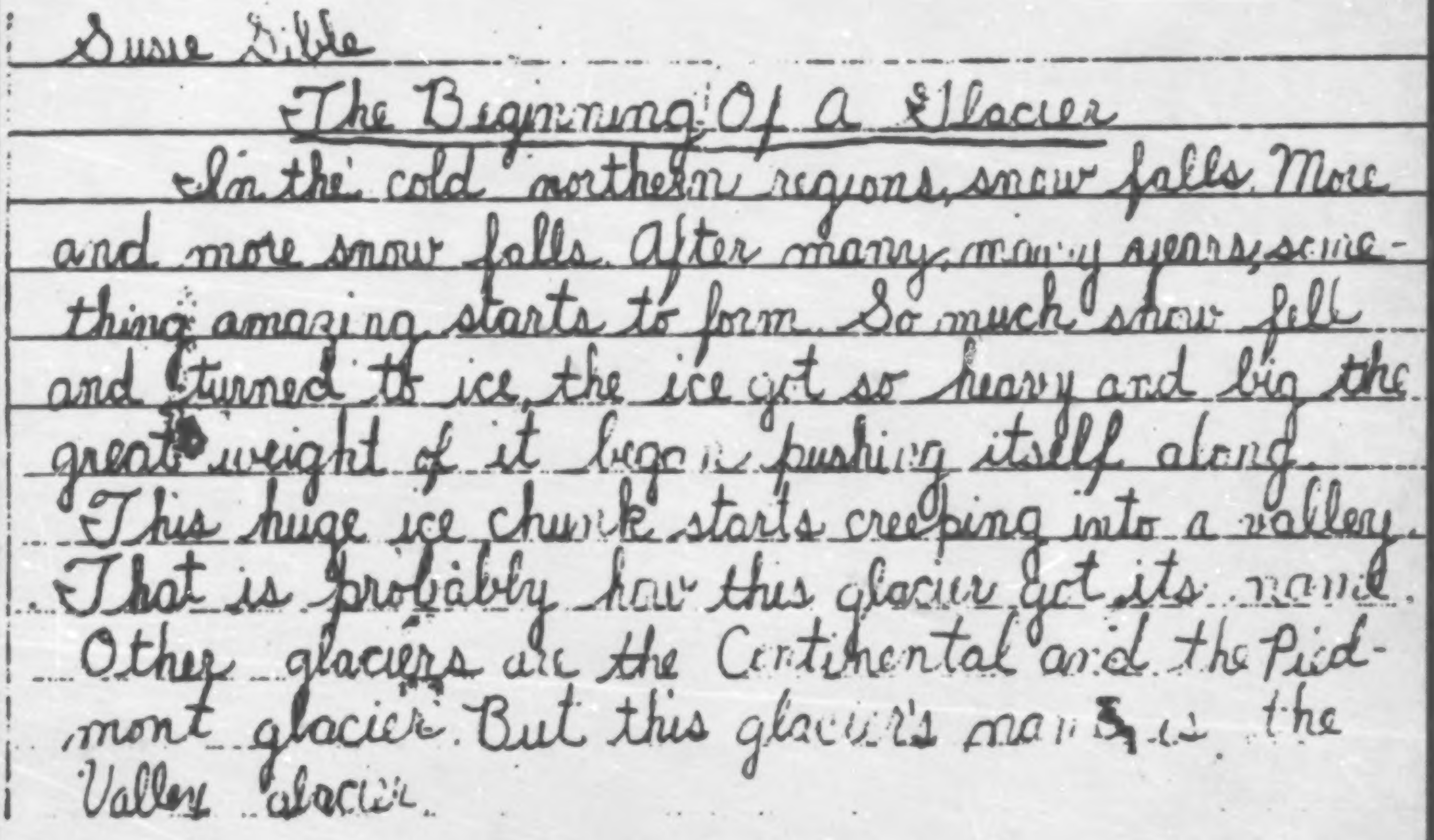
Susie Sible

DRAFT 1

Glaciers are very thick huge ~~chunks~~ masses of ice. They come from cold regions in the North. In the North snow falls. And more snow falls. Untill so much snow builds up ~~and~~ the snow starts pussing down. There are ~~the~~ three types of glaciers there is the Vally glacier, Continental glaciers and Piedmont glacier. Now I'll tell about the vally glacier. Vally glaciers look like frozen rivers. They fill vallys ~~forming~~ As they move along the land they push up ~~so~~ rock and soil to the sides up of them. These form mountains. After the vally glaciers ~~go~~ gone from there rows of mountains will be standing where the glacier was.

Now I'll talk about the Continental glaciers. Continental glaciers move along like stretched out ice cubes. They are much bigger of course.

After rereading draft #1 several times and conferencing with a friend, Susie decided to write a second draft, focusing on just one kind of glacier. Draft #2 was written, then Susie reread it, fiddling with her word choice and adding notes into her margins: Explain more Tell how. Using these notes as a guide, she began a third draft, this time sectioning her piece with subtitles. After again refining and editing, Susie finally wrote a final draft, the proud result of three weeks of writing--and of reading:



Susie Sible

## The Beginning Of a Glacier

In the cold northern regions, snow falls. More and more snow falls. After many, many years, something amazing starts to form. So much snow fell and turned to ice, the ice got so heavy and big the great weight of it began pushing itself along. This huge ice chunk starts creeping into a valley. That is probably how this glacier got its name. Other glaciers are the Continental and the Piedmont glacier. But this glacier's name is the Valley glacier.

## Making Mountains

As the Valley glacier moves along it pushes dirt and rock out from the sides of it. These huge mounds of dirt and rock form mountains. It would take a long time to make mountains because glaciers travel only about seven hundred to a thousand feet a year. That's not even a mile.

## Melting Away

The melting of a glacier is done at the end of a glaciers not at the beginning. The beginning of a glacier is where the glacier was formed, in the north. In the north it is mostly cold. That's why it melts at the end. In the middle of a glacier it will melt. How much it melts all depends on the weather of that year. If it was a mild, and warm lots of melting will take place. But if it was cold and stormy not as much melting will happen in the middle. When glaciers cover a spot then melt away a lake or river might be where the glacier was. The river or lake is water that melted from the glacier.

## What Glaciers Left Behind

Do you know how the Great Lakes were made? They were made by glaciers. Probably when the glaciers started melting they left huge pools of water behind them. I really never knew how big lakes such as the Great Lakes were made. Did you?

## Section 7

## Methodology

### Choice of Methodology

Traditionally, this is the place where researchers defend their methodological decisions as being a necessary outgrowth of the problems they tackled. And indeed, I have already cited reasons why growth in writing is best studied longitudinally, in natural settings, by researchers whose questions are open-ended ones.

Yet a defense could be mounted for any form of research, and although I do believe one kind is more timely than another depending on the knowledge base one is working from, we nevertheless do need all kinds of inquiry. As Elliot Eisner (1980) from Stanford University says so well:

> Each approach to the study of educational situations has its own unique perspective to provide. Each sheds its unique light on the situations that humans seek to understand...the issue is not qualitative as contrasted with non-qualitative... because only with both can we achieve binocular vision. Looking through one eye never did provide much depth of field. (p. 9)

There are many ways to investigate how children change as writers. My methodology is not simply a by-product of my subject matter. Instead, how we do research, like how we teach, reflects our underlying assumptions about human nature and about learning. "In the end, what men think about human nature underlies how they handle educational problems" (Brumbaugh and Lawrence, 1973, p. 6). This is the premise of Philosophic Themes in Modern Education; it's also the premise of my discussion of methodology.

Our research design--and I say "our" because I'm speaking now of the larger N.I.E. study which involved Graves, Sowers and myself--seems patterned after the Piagetian growth model. Piaget claims growth happens through assimilation and accommodation; through times of equilibrium and then times of imbalance, followed by new equilibriums. Growth, then, is seen as an ongoing and a recursive process of continually cycling back to fit past experiences into new forms of organization. Equally basic is the notion that, especially at first, we learn best not by verbal abstractions but by interactions with the natural world. Finally, there is no such thing as knowledge separate from the knower, for as Kant says, "We cannot know things in themselves since we always contribute something from ourselves."

These ideas are neither radical nor new; but the prospect of applying them to dissertation research is as radical as the prospect of applying them to classrooms. For dissertation research is usually a linear process: one first reads the literature, then defines a problem, which leads next to a methodology, followed by data collection. After the data is gathered, analysis begins. Finally the findings are fit into the research paper format, and either put on a shelf or rewritten for readers.

Our process has been quite different. There has been an ebb and flow to each aspect of the research, but most stages have been present most of the time. The review of the literature never stopped. During those first two years of field work, I reviewed the literature mostly when our case-study subjects were on vacation, taking IOWA tests, or having Christmas parties. During the past two years, I've reviewed the literature when the writing's gone badly and I needed a refuge from it, and when the writing's gone well, and led me to new questions and new energy.

"Defining the methodology"--so often reserved for the front end of a project--has also continued throughout the study. Because no one had done a project such as this before, we learned by trial and error, with our methods evolving over time. Many, alas, are still evolving in retrospect, so when one researcher recently asked me to help him learn our methodology so that he could replicate our NIE funded study, my response was, "Heavens--don't replicate our mistakes, learn from them!"

No ethnographic researcher would be surprised to hear that data analysis and writing continue still, two years after we finished gathering data and long after funding has ended. The more surprising thing is that we began analyzing the data and writing for publication the day we began the research project. Our first article was written one month into the study--not surprisingly, it was about the beginnings of the project. Before we'd finished collecting data, Graves, Sowers and I had written and published about 20 articles--8 of them were mine.

And "Defining the Problem," isn't that the section I still have to write--my recommendations for future research?

I'm not sure I would have had the courage to describe our research project for what it was save for the fact that others, too, are admitting that research is a recursive and a messy process. In his closing remarks at a recent meeting of researchers connected with the National Institute of Education, Roger Shuy (1980) said:

> Research isn't necessarily linear. The old model... may no longer be viable. Rather, the view presented (by researchers present at that meeting) was more like the view presented of writing--a recursive model with theory, research and practice interacting.

## Selection of the Site

Along the southern border of New Hampshire, a little gathering of buildings marks the presence of a New England town known as Atkinson. Two country roads cross, and a village store stands at their intersection. Nearby there are two churches. One is flanked by a graveyard, the other by a little brick library. A minute down the road there is a white wooden schoolhouse, the town's pride and joy. Above the grassy hill in front of the school a flag flies, and beneath the flag, set against pine trees, a white sign reads:

ATKINSON ACADEMY
incorporated 1787
built 1803
The second co-educational
school in America

There is a classical symmetry to the face of the building, a symmetry which is highlighted by the building's bell tower. But a closer look reveals that at the back of the school, wings of new classrooms jut this way and that into the playground. On one side there is a cluster of portable classrooms. Inside the building, too, are signs of the skyrocketing school population, the result of New Hampshire's low tax rates and of Boston's widening belt of influence. Many classrooms are crowded and every storage closet has long ago been converted into instructional space. It is now a wealthy district. Starting salaries for a teacher are below $10,000, and the per capita expense for each student averages about $ .

But the school nevertheless has a special aura about it--one which is immediately apparent upon entering the building. Outside the front office, there's apt to be a display of plants and artwork, one of the many contributions of the school's custodian, Hughie, who from time to time also reads book reviews over the public address system.

Invariably, the school principal is not to be found in the front office--instead one has to look among the classrooms to find Jean Robbins. The rooms are as different as the teachers who created them; but the third, fourth and fifth grades tend to be traditional, the lower grades, less so. On the whole, educational policy is conventional, humane and competent.

Graves chose the site. The choice was not based on convenience, for Atkinson is almost an hour's drive from the University of New Hampshire. Nor was the choice based on the school's approach to writing. When the study began, children in Atkinson, as in most schools, wrote rarely, and when they did they wrote on assigned topics, silently, for teachers who corrected and graded the papers, then returned them with smiling faces and encouraging remarks written in the top margin.

Graves chose Atkinson because the teachers cared about children and were secure enough to change. And he chose it because he knew the importance of a strong principal, and Jean Robbins was certainly strong. Robbins was determined to have us at her school. Later we learned that the word in town was, "What Jean Robbins wants, she gets." Although we thought we chose her, perhaps, in fact, she chose us.

Jean Robbins must have sensed, as none of us did at the time, the immense impact such a research project would have on her school. Although Graves, Sowers and I came into the school in a low-key way, refusing to be teachers of teachers and insisting instead on being students of children, this in itself is a powerful force for change. Our focus on children led teachers to also focus on children. It seems that when children are given time to write, and when researchers and teachers jointly watch what children do, there is new energy and new excitement for writing. And so the writing process spread from teacher to teacher, from classroom to classroom. It spread not by decree, but by contagion.

There were some teachers who wanted no part in it. In time, the school split into factions: those who wrote and those who didn't. This caused some tension, for teachers who were involved in the writing process were in the spotlight, and the others were not. Visitors from the four corners of the world came to Atkinson, wanting to see some rooms, not all. But growth does lead to imbalance. That's part of the process of change.

## Subject Selection

For the larger N.I.E. study, our intention was to build a tentative map of how children change as writers between first and fourth grade. To do this, we planned to follow

8 first graders through second grade, and 8 third graders through fourth grade. We wanted children who were as different from each other as possible. And so our intention was to choose 2 children from each grade who were "less able" writers, 2 "average" writers, and 2 "above average" writers. Then, because we were especially concerned to have a strong representation of subjects from either end of the scale where there'd be less overlap, we planned on selecting additional subjects who fit into the categories of "less able" first graders and of "more able" third graders. That was, in any case, the plan.

Subject-selection was not something we took lightly. Our entire first month was spent observing all the children in several first and third grade rooms. Using an array of criteria Graves had devised, we tried to categorize youngsters from each grade into the three ability levels. Then other criteria were applied--more intuitive ones. We wanted children who would show us a lot, and so we tried to predict which children would not only change but also would let us observe these changes. Therefore we tended to select open, accessible children. And, I suppose, we chose children we liked. For example, after we'd decided on our subjects, Graves asked if we could add one more little girl into the study. We wondered why--and his answer was, "Because she's irresistible." When Frank Smith visited our research site, he jokingly accused us of selecting the most beautiful children in each classroom.

In any case, we formed a tentative list of 20 children, with the expectation that the list would be whittled down by children's parents who declined to give permission for their child to participate in the study. No such luck! In fact, the only trouble we ran into from parents were those who called wanting to know why their child wasn't included.

In time the study evolved into a pyramid structure. We broadened the base, collecting some data from all the children in each classroom. Meanwhile, of the 20 original subjects, 12 of them became particularly key, and of those, we especially focused on 5 or 6. In the third and fourth grades (my territory), Susie became one of the key children, along with Birger and Greg. It seemed each day those three youngsters led me to new "mountain ranges and valleys."

Above all, Susie helped me learn about revision. This became an area of special interest to me, and it certainly is a concern for educators who work with writers of every age level. My choice of Susie, then, happened both day-to-day when I found I could not pull myself away from her side, and in retrospect, when I realized that her story speaks to all who are interested in writing development.

## Data Collection

Imagine my distress when my subjects had been chosen, and suddenly it was time to begin. Begin what? There I was, clipboard in hand, feeling totally and absolutely NOT like a researcher. "Do I just write stuff down?" I wondered. "What do I write?"

I've learned since then that most ethnographers experience the same loss of identity. As Agar describes it in The Professional Stranger (1980), "Suddenly you do not know the rules anymore...You have no idea what is expected of you" (p. 50). In part this identity confusion is integral to ethnographic research, in part it probably comes from the erroneous assumptions that fieldwork is not something you can train people for, that folks just have to do it, and then, as Agar says, "exchange knowing looks with others who had been initiated" (p. 2).

In the same book, Agar tells the story of a graduate student at Berkeley who was given a grant and told to study an Indian group. No one told her how to do ethnography, no one even told her where the tribe was located. As Agar tells it,

> With trembling heart and sweaty palms, she approached the door of Kroeber (one of the founding fathers of American anthropology) for some advice. After several passes by the open door, she entered and nervously cleared her throat...(When Kroeber looked up) the student explained her dilemma and asked for advice. "Well," said Kroeber, returning to his typing, "I suggest you buy a notebook and a pencil." (p. 2)

Well, I had a notebook and a pencil. I had one other thing, too. Colleagues. Not long after the research began, I learned an invaluable lesson from Graves. We'd gone into a third grade room together. The kids weren't writing, but then, they rarely were writing back then, so we decided to stay. I remember pacing up and down the rows of children; the kids were copying things out of their math books. I kept waiting for someone to Do Something so I could gather some data. But no, they just kept on copying out of those math books. I went to the back of the room and leaned against the radiator and waited for some data to appear. Nothing. Finally I signaled to Graves, who'd been scurrying about, and we left.

Before I could let out a quiet groan of weariness, Graves burst out with:

> What a gold mine! Isn't it amazing? How'd you suppose that one kid up front could write with a 2-inch long pencil? And that guy with the the golf-ball eraser on the end of his pencil. Zowie.
>
> Wasn't it something the way some kids had desks down around their knees; chairs so high, desks so low...Imagine what that does for penmanship! And then those other kids; on their low little chairs, reaching up to desks that towered over them...

I had learned a big lesson. The task of case-study research is to make the familiar unfamiliar.

But the solution to one problem raises another. Once I gained the eyes to see, everything became potential data. What kinds of behaviors were the important ones? How systematic should I be? I needed a sense of priorities, a vision of where we were going.

It would have been helpful back then to read the paper Eisner presented (1980) in which he distinguishes between "scientific" and "artistic" qualitative research. Eisner defines scientific qualitative research as:

> Inquiries that use formal instruments as the primary basis for data collection, that transform the data collected into numerical indices of one kind or another, and that attempt to generalize in a formal way to some universe beyond itself. (p. 5)
>
> The research aim is to operationalize both the perception and recording of human behavior through codification. The methods of data collection and analysis can be routinized and the results objectified. (p. 6)

Many of the case-studies described in my review of the literature tend towards being examples of "scientific qualitative research," and like most ethnographic researchers, I felt tugs towards this direction. And yet...

In the qualitative research which Eisner describes as "artistic," researchers are interested not only in manifest-behaviors but also in the experiences individuals are having and the meanings they attach to those experiences. Statistics on the rate and frequency of behavior occurrences are not enough to build this kind of an understanding. Instead, these manifest behaviors act as a cue from which the researcher continually asks, "What might this mean?" Only as they combine meticulous observation with empathy do these researchers gain a tentative understanding of their subjects. Whereas in scientific-qualitative research the goal is to leave behind the particulars in favor of generalizations, Eisner suggests that:

> Artistic approaches to research try to locate the general in the particular. They attempt to shed light on what is unique in time and space while at the same time conveying insights that exceed the limits of the situation in which they emerge.
>
> [This] researcher is interested in making the particular vivid so that its qualities can be experienced because he believes that the particular has a contribution to make to the comprehension of what is general. (p. 7)

Eisner's description of artistic research reminds me of the writing in Lewis Thomas' Lives of a Cell. Graves, Sowers and I talked about that book during the early weeks of our study. It was sort of our model.

But we never really decided between "artistic" and "scientific" research. We were drawn to both. Sometimes data collection involved using a stopwatch to time shifts between behaviors during writing. Other times data collection involved journal-like notes on the classroom scene and our responses to it. There was always an unresolved tension over how scientific we should be.

On the whole, our methods of data collection changed in response to what the children were doing. When Susie told me she was writing at night under the covers, I began interviewing her parents. When Susie and Diane pledged to be best friends for life, their whispers and their secrets prompted me to focus on other children for a while, gathering data on Susie only through interviews.

Not long after our study was over, Marcia W. Farr, our funding officer from N.I.E., recommended this eclectic sort of an approach (thereby relieving me of some of my anxieties!) She said at a meeting of researchers (1980):

> We must create research structures out of what we find--out of the data. We often try to hide the fact that writing is a human activity; as such, what we really need to do in order to get valid information is to pick our way along and eclectically use methodologies from here and there, selecting techniques to help us learn what we want to know. Being eclectic does not preclude being rigorous in our thinking; it simply allows us to stay close to the real world in our work.

Some of the methods I used to gather reseeach data included these:

1. field notes taken during Susie's writing
2. interviews - both informal ones and more formal ones conducted at regular intervals
3. other methods, including collection of written work and videotaped data

1. Field Notes

Koebler's advice wasn't bad. With pencil and paper I have gathered the data which has served me the best. Although most ethnographers describe the limitations of field notes, no one seems to have a substitute for them. Certainly I don't.

One of the most common problems ethnographers describe is the dilemma of whether to take field notes in public. Informants often become reticent when the note pad and pencil appear. Stories are told of one anthropologist who ran into the bushes every time he learned something, to scribble furiously and then reappeared, smiling innocently. No one in the tribe said anything about this behavior, but the folk herbist soon visited him with a cure for diarrhea (Agar, p. 112).

My field notes were never hidden from the children. At first some youngsters were a little perplexed over the notes. One first-grader told his mother, "I'm worried about Miss Lucy. She keeps copying and copying my pictures. I tell her that if she keeps on trying, pretty soon she'll

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be able to make her own."

But the children soon caught on to the nature of my work, and reticence was hardly a problem! It was not uncommon for first graders to call out to me, "Copy me!" The third graders were more subtle. At the end of the study, Susie confessed that sometimes if I'd been spending all my time watching other children, she'd try to lure me over to watch her. "I'd act like I was thinking really hard about something important," she said. "And if that didn't work, I'd do some cross-outs."

The more important problem with field notes, for me, was the fact that I couldn't possibly get everything down on paper. As Susie wrote a single word, her lips might move in a certain manner, her hand would grip the pencil in a particular way, her eyes might flicker up the page and fix for an instant on a specific word. Perhaps a friend might peer over her shoulder, or the teacher might draw closer...and these were only the overt behaviors which accompanied her writing! All of this happened in one instant--a simultaneous interaction of context, process, text, person and time. Perhaps--conceivably--a researcher could capture and describe all this, if only time held still! But moment follows moment, and any effort to contain and describe all that happens during writing quickly leads to despair.

I quickly learned my own breed of shorthand, and more importantly, our secretary, Lois Cyr, learned to decode it. But no matter how fast I wrote, I was nevertheless being selectively attentive, filtering the data through my own paradigms. Ethnographers have a saying, attributed to William James, that you can't pick up rocks in a field without a theory. The point is a wise one.

The solution is not to bulldoze every single rock off the field. And for me, tape recording or videotaping each writing episode would have proved totally unworkable. One hour of audio tape requires about five hours of secretarial time in order to be transcribed; one hour of videotape requires closer to five days. And I was observing children for four hours a day, four days a week, for two years. The result would have been more data than we could ever read, let alone make sense out of. As it was, I gathered 1,200 pages of single-spaced typing on Susie alone.

In a study such as ours, when any given day's field notes are inevitably incomplete, time becomes an important ally. Many writing behaviors are recurring ones. Because I meticulously collected data, day-by-day, month after month, gaps were filled in over time. The important patterns probably emerged.

Nevertheless, as I look back on the data now, I begin to see ways I could have dealt with the inevitable incompleteness of my data. First, I could have narrowed my focus more often and gathered complete, systematic data on one preselected variable. Like any solution, this would have created new problems--had I done it often or on many variables, I would have totally disrupted the continuity of my broader field notes. But some of this might have helped. I regret that now when I look back on my field notes and find that on September 9th I recorded six instances in which Susie reread her text, and on December 11th, 18 instances, neither count can be viewed as definitive, for I may have simply been watching and recording other behaviors, missing out on many rereading occurrences.

Second, I could have videotaped Susie's writing process three times a year, at regular intervals, so that when I return to the data now with new things to look for, I could replay the tapes and find answers to my new questions. These videotapes would also help me to see the ways in which changes in my field notes reflect changes in my abilities to observe, rather than changes in Susie's writing behaviors. Yet this solution, like others, is not as simple as it might seem, for Susie's involvement in a piece of writing often lasted for 10 or 12 hours, and no single slice of that time could be called "representative" of the entire episode.

Finally, as a team of researchers we could have met more often analyzed and compared our methods of data collection. Assuming that ethnographic data will inevitably reflect the assumptions and biases of the participant observer, our best hope was to make those assumptions and biases conscious and explicit. In that way, they could be reconsidered and documented. For a number of reasons, Graves, Sowers and I tended to work in separate classrooms, using separate methods to record what we saw. There were advantages to this, but important disadvantages as well.

Researchers who want to gather field notes on the writing process will face another dilemma. What format should these notes take? Initially our research team planned to use a two-column system Graves devised for his study of 7 year-olds. With some adaptations, this served us well with first and second grade children. (See Appendix A) While a child wrote, a researcher seated nearby copied the child's printed words into the left-hand column of an Observation Sheet. Each behavior and each printed word was assigned to a chronological number--these numbers were already written onto the Observation Sheets. In the right hand column, researchers jotted down behavior notes, and each note was assigned to the appropriate number. For example, a sheet might begin like this:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | The boy | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | is | X | | going |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

1. Sarah takes out her paper and says, "I'm going to write about the boy."
2. She counts the number of pages in her book.
3. No voicing or sounding.
4. /b/ /b/

5. rr 3-4
6. "The boy is going: is"
8. /g/ (writes c)
9. returns to 8 and crosses out

I soon found this format was unsuited to third and fourth graders. Many of the children wrote rapidly, often averaging ten words a minute. It wasn't possible to copy their writing while also taking detailed notes on their process. And so I devised a system whereby I took process notes on notebook paper, but in the left hand margin, alongside my notes, I jotted down a word or two which would later remind me of the position on that behavior in the text. For example, I might write "line 6, How," or "3rd cross out." Immediately after each day's writing workshop was over, I'd take the children's texts to the main office and make a photocopy of them. Then I'd insert numbers which corresponded to my notes into the photocopies. Later, at the University of New Hampshire, I'd reread my notes and expand on them, then both the text (with the numbers) and the notes were each typed alongside the other, in columns.

This system was further complicated by the fact that most of the writing done by the third and fourth graders involved revision. The written work of any one day needed to be viewed within the context of both the preceding draft and the following draft, for the children were often working from one draft towards another. Because my observations often involved their interactions with two drafts, a two-column sheet on which my notes accompanied a single draft was inappropriate. Therefore, my observations were typed onto three-column sheets and the evolution of any one piece of writing was conveyed through a great many of these three-column sheets which (in the mind's eye) were linked horizontally (see Appendix B).

### 2. Interviews

I had it all planned. Through field notes I'd document changes in Susie's writing process. Through interviews I'd document changes in her concepts of good writing and her awareness of her craft. Because Susie was only one of several case-study subjects, I figured I'd watch her one morning a week. That way, each week I'd document a sampling of her writing behaviors. How little did I know!

A flexible version of that plan worked in first-grade classrooms, where children often began and finished a piece of writing within a day. But by third grade, children tended to spend at least a week working on each piece. If I'd observed Susie on Mondays only, I would have had a very odd sampling of her writing process. For example, on one Monday I might document the selection of a topic and the beginnings of a draft, and on the following Monday I might document the completion of her fourth draft and the editing of it for spelling mistakes. Such "samplings" would not have been enough: they left too many unanswered questions.

Just as I was realizing I needed a record of the interactions and turning points in the life of each piece, Mrs. Howard began talking about moving the desks from rows into clusters. I seized the opportunity and made a request--could all my case-study subjects be moved into one cluster? This proved invaluable, for now I could follow another child and still keep an eye on Susie, and to a lesser extent, on Greg and Birger.

But watching from a distance was not enough. On the days when Susie was not the focus of my attention, in addition to maintaining a peripheral awareness of her, I used informal interviews to fill in the gaps. When writing workshop was over, I'd usually go to her desk and interview her for 10 or 15 minutes; those interactions were crucial ones.

Neither the "process interview" nor the peripheral observations would have been particularly effective without the other, but the combination was a powerful one. Because I watched Susie from a distance, I knew not only when to have the interviews, but also what questions to ask. In journalism, there is a saying that to get information you have to give information. I began to appreciate the wisdom of that adage, for the more I knew about Susie's writing, the more I could learn about it. A naive question "what did you do today?" was nowhere near as effective as an informed one, "Susie, I noticed you pausing for a long time before you wrote. What was on your mind?" The more specific and concrete I could be in my questions, the more specific and concrete Susie was in her answers.

This was true not only in the process interviews, but also in the concept interviews which were held regularly, every three months. Susie and I usually left the classroom for these more extended interviews, often going to the library for an hour or so. We always brought along her cumulative writing folder, and I'd ask her to rank her pieces from best to worst. Her judgments became the basis for questions directed towards understanding her concepts of good writing. Here again, I tried to be specific and concrete, knowing her answers would be richer.

In all the interviews, I found the difference between more and less effective questions often lay simply in the phrasing of the question.

| Less Effective Questions | More Effective Questions |
|---|---|
| Susie, why is this story the one you like best? | Susie, do you know what it is about this story which makes you rank it above that one? |
| What does a person have to do to be a good writer? | If you were going to write a story and you wanted it to be the best story in all the world, how would you go about writing it? What would you do first? |

| | |
|---|---|
| Susie, how has your writing process changed since third grade? | Can you remember, Susie, how you used to go about writing a piece, like in early third grade? (She recalls, and I jot down everything she says in a list.) Now I have an important question. How is your writing process different now from then? Do you still.... |
| You know how all writers have their own writing style? Can you describe your style, Susie? | Susie, if you think about how you write and how Amy and Diane and Greg each writes...how does your writing style compare to theirs? Like, take Amy... |
| How did you go about writing this draft? | Would you read this draft to me and every line or so, stop and tell me what you were trying to do, how you went about writing that part. |

Although so far I've focused on the questions I asked, I soon learned that most important information did not lie underneath my questions, but rather, underneath Susie's answers. I learned the most when my attention was not on my questions, but on her answers. When I really listened to her answers, they became like a vein of gold. If I was quiet and waited, Susie often reflected on her first answer and then embellished it, taking off onto her own tangents. These were moments when she was in control, leading me to the areas of rich information. If I listened well, I could help her lead. Because this is hard to explain, I've included several transcripts of interviews in the Appendix C, and I hope they show what I am trying to tell.

In time, the questions I asked during interviews became less important. As the children grew to anticipate my interests, they answered questions without my asking them. This was an unexpected and important development, for it meant the writer could take charge of our interactions. Sometimes when I was sitting near her, Susie would compose aloud; a running monologue would accompany her writing. Oftentimes the talking would lapse into silence, and it might continue for days. Then, too, because she anticipated the kinds of questions I might ask, she not only controlled the timing of many of our interactions, she also could answer questions which I wouldn't have known to ask. The essential thing was, when Susie shared the control of our interactions, I learned more from her.

### 3. Other Ways of Collecting Data

Along with field notes from observations of Susie's writing process and transcripts from interviews, I also collected data from as many other sources as possible. It is this range of methodologies and perspectives, all coalescing and converging together, which provides depth to a case-study. Wilson describes this, saying (1977):

> The (participant observer) researcher links together the information he gathers by various methods in a way that is nearly impossible with other approaches, and he has access to some unique kinds of information. (p. 256)

One important source of information was Susie's teachers. Both Mrs. Howard and Mrs. Currier became co-researchers, jotting down things they noticed, saving bits of Susie's work which I missed, telling me about their interactions with her.

Susie's parents also provided me with some information, but because we only met occasionally, they were allies more than informants in the research. Nevertheless, their role was important. Because they supported the research, they often reminded Susie to bring work she'd done at home into school. More than that, it was probably because they trusted me that Susie did as well.

Even the school librarian helped with data collection. She'd notice things which happened in the library, and on her own initiative she kept notes of the books Susie checked out and sent this information along to me.

Sometimes I collected data on Susie through videotapes. But for a variety of reasons, Graves, Sowers and I found that the videotapes of first and second graders were more informative than those of the third and fourth graders, and consequently we brought the video equipment into the upper elementary classrooms so rarely that the children never became accustomed to it. And so my videotapes of Susie's writing do not quite "ring true" for me. Now I use them more as a way to show teachers what children can do than as a source of data on Susie.

I also gathered information on Susie through collections of her written work. All of the children in both the third and fourth grade classrooms kept every draft of every piece of writing. The children dated and numbered the drafts, stapled them in order, and kept them in cumulative writing folders. These folders were an important source of data for me on the entire class, and they also provided a system for managing my paper-load. I didn't have to shuffle through children's desk, lunch boxes and coat pockets in order to find children's writing. I always knew every draft of every piece would be in the youngsters' folders.

At the end of each writing workshop, I would bring the folders of all my case-study subjects into the school office, and photocopy each draft that each child had worked on that day. I didn't wait for the draft to be completed before doing this, for I never knew whether the next day a writer might cross out the entire page or rework it until it was illegible.

Some mention must be made of the ways I did not collect data. Only on two occasions did I systematically intervene in all the children's writing, asking them each to perform a task for me in order to collect quantifiable data (Calkins, 1981a, 1981b). Some researchers have questioned why we did not make greater attempts to juxtapose our descriptive, anecdotal data with more formal, systematic data. Agar (1980) recommends that case-study, ethnographic research projects follow "the funnel design," in which researchers eventually narrow towards some systematic testing of a specific question. I did not do this; perhaps another time I would; I do not know.

What I do know is that our study would have been different had I done those things. There would have been losses as well as gains. Had I intervened in the children's writing, asking them to perform controlled tasks, both the teachers and the children would have viewed me differently. Had my study followed the funnel design, I would not have collected two years of longitudinal data on how children changed as writers within the context of their classrooms. Another important factor to be considered is that I would not have had the same length of time to learn to see what the children were showing me. Those two years were important not only because there was time enough for the children to change as writers, there was also time enough for me to change as a researcher. My ability to see always lagged behind what the children were showing me. I do not know how one can weigh the value of hard data against the value of time. There would have been trade-offs. Would one year have been enough?

## Conclusions

I have tried to document my evolving methods of data collection in some detail, not only so that others might use and refine them, but also because as I observed Susie's writing development, I also participated in it.

I have no doubt, for example, that my interviews and even just my presence made Susie more conscious of her own writing process. And my fascination over her every cross-out and her every draft no doubt made Susie honor her process of craft more than she might have otherwise.

I did try to minimize my effect on Susie's writing process. I spent a great deal of time observing other children. I was discrete about copying her drafts. I often--but not always--refrained from interrupting Susie with my questions. Above all, I did not take over as teacher. When I couldn't resist making a suggestion, I'd ask her teacher to make it instead, so that Susie did not see me as part of the teaching force, but instead as a quiet observer.

But I not only tried to minimize my effect, I also tried to document it, viewing my research methods as part of the context in which Susie's writing development took place. The fact that my research methods did extend Susie's writing development may be the single most important finding of the study. Perhaps the boundary between good ethnographic research and good teaching is a thin one. Perhaps we can teach our children best by watching what they do, by asking them to tell us their thinking, by listening to what they can teach us.

## Data Analysis

When our study began, we envisioned tracing children's growth in writing along variables which would be plotted onto a wall-sized map. The variables--more than 30 of them--had been specified in the N.I.E. proposal. They included changes in a child's pencil grip, in the ways children dealt with the space on their page.

Our plans were soon scrapped, because as soon as we got onto the site, the variables seemed irrelevant. We were watching youngsters, not variables, and our first challenge was to understand individuals rather than to do cross-sectional analyses.

Several months after the study began, we did return to the initial list of variables, but by then the list was obsolete. The children had long since led us to new variables. For example, neither of the two concerns which had become paramount in our study, invented spelling and revision, were mentioned in the initial list of variables, for we'd never dreamed children could begin writing before they knew most of their sounds and letters, or that they'd make successive drafts.

But make no mistake. When we set aside the list of 30 variables, we did not set aside the need to analyze data. In fact, we badly wanted a system--right away--to categorize what we were seeing. Whereas eventually data analysis grew out of a need to understand what we were seeing, in those first months I think it grew more from a need to be good researchers. We needed to feel scientific and meticulous and responsible. Documenting and enjoying the children's behaviors seemed too natural and easy to be an important N.I.E. research project. It was this, I think, which prompted Graves, Sowers and me to develop our charts.

In columns running across each child's chart, we used tiny codes and number counts to tabulate 20+ factors relating to each piece of writing done by each child. In these one-inch-wide columns we squeezed in the child's writing rate, the total number of words, the percentage of misspelled words. We had codes signifying the nature of voicing behaviors, the kinds of audiences, and the number of times children reread. We had counts of the number of words/phrases/sentences and sections which were revised. In our little columns, we even showed whether the revisions had been additions, deletions or substitutions, and where in the text they'd taken place. All these factors fit into a one-inch wide column which ran across a single sheet of paper--and so obviously a magnifying lens would have been helpful.

The charts were ridiculous, but none of us said so at the time. For me, the problem was that within two days of instituting the charts, I was so utterly behind on them that I went to great lengths to steer all discussions around the topic, praying no one else would mention it until I'd had a chance to catch up. I spent my entire Christmas vacation that year on the charts, and the moment I could finally hold my head high again I phoned Graves. "You know, I've been meaning to mention those charts," I said to him, feigning casualness. "Do you really think they're worthwhile?"

"I was just about to phone you with the same question," Graves said. As it turned out, all three of us had spent the vacation catching up on the charts, and we were all quite clear: they were neither helpful nor practical.

For one thing, none of the counts were as clear-cut as we'd thought. Take writing rate: whereas at first it had been a relatively simple thing to compute, once children began alternating between pulling in for rapid bursts of writing and pulling away for reflection and conferences, a single number showing words-per-minute had little meaning. Then, too, many of the counts were inappropriate for certain children. I did not need to keep track of Susie's spelling mistakes or her voicing behaviors; too many other things were more pertinent to her writing growth. But far more important than any specific problem with the charts was the overall fact that they did not help us read out from what the children were doing. Instead they were a superimposed pattern which distracted us from seeing what children did when they wrote, and how those behaviors changed.

In the introduction of her dissertation, Glenda Bissex--another researcher from the growth-model paradigm--describes how she, too, struggled with this issue as she attempted to make sense out of the overwhelming barrage of data relating to her son Paul's growth in reading and writing. Bissex writes (1980):

> In the process of looking at and trying to organize my material and my thoughts about it, I more than once sought a scheme, a set of categories, a philosophic view--some pre-existing form to shape it. Israel Scheffler gave me wise and difficult advice when he observed that categories, by directing our efforts to pigeon-holing rather than to looking at our material, may make us see less of it, not more. Carol Chomsky, more than once, has urged me to make my own maps of the territory...So what I have here has come mainly from looking again and again at my material in all its detail, and trying to find forms while respecting its irregularities. I found in the end that generalizations, as they distill meanings, may also dispell them by abstracting away the very particulars which gave them life.

The decision to make one's own maps of the territory does not imply that the data are left to speak for themselves. Data analysis, in fact, becomes more time consuming and more difficult when one attempts to read out from the data, but now, as Matthew Miles points out (1979):

> The risk is not that of 'imposing' a self-binding framework, but that an incoherent, bulky, irrelevant, meaningless set of observations may be produced, which no one can (or even wants to) make sense of. (p. 591)

Many of our new--and this time, lasting--forms of data analysis were so simple and logical that I doubt we could have believed in them had we not tried the others. For example, we began to write little summaries at the end of each day's observational notes. We started notebooks of anecdotes, filing our little gems into retrievable categories. We instituted team meetings in which one of us would report on a child, and then we'd look together at data concerning that youngster, sharing observations, questions, and hunches. We became aware in those meetings of how much data analysis each of us had already been doing in our minds...and of the need to share our hypotheses so they could be tested and extended.

More important than any of these other methods of data analysis was the fact that we were writing. Throughout the two years of data collection, my writing provided me with a lens through which I could study the data. Because I was writing about Susie, Greg and the others, I could balance the minutia of my daily observations with broader questions and concerns. I approached not only the data, but the data collection, asking, "What might this mean?" "How are these two children different as writers?" "What have been the breakthroughs in this child's writing?" These questions led to hunches, and then I'd pore over the data, testing the hunches, sometimes beginning to sense a potential article. Then there'd be new reasons to return to the data, this time gathering information to use in my writing.

Now as I look back on the articles I wrote in the midst of data-collection, I realize they're more like investigative journalism than research. This is not surprising. The data were fast-breaking, and I couldn't pull myself away from the site long enough to contemplate slowly what I was seeing.

Although the articles do not do justice to the study, I do not doubt, for a moment, that they were crucially important to our project. They were a kind of life-line for us. They connected our research project with real audiences. Just as children write more when they know that an eager audience awaits their every word, so, too, we were spurred on by knowing this research project was already speaking to teachers in new and important ways.

Then, too, the writing was important because I do believe writing is a mode of learning...and that by writing about the children, I learned to understand what they were showing me.

It has been hard to make my own maps of the territory. Often as I look back on my notebooks of data, as I scan the thousands of pages they contain, I am overwhelmed by the detail and the interrelatedness of my observational data. Often I long for the clarity of numbers and charts, of data which arrives already packaged in little boxes. My data was fun to collect, but is hard to make sense of, to condense and to share.

It would have been simpler had I counted the number of times Susie referred to audience, and charted changes in her sentence lengths. But I do not believe such research speaks to teachers. As Graves has said (1981):

> One of the reasons teachers have neglected research information for so long is that they have been unable to transfer faceless data to the alive, inquiring faces of the children they teach each morning. Furthermore, the language used to convey these data has the same voiceless tone that goes with the projection of faceless information.

The research project officially ended two years ago--and at that point, for me, a new and intensive kind of data analysis began. With funding from the Research Foundation of the National Council of Teachers of English, I copied most of the data, lining my office with some 35 notebooks of data plus piles of videotapes. Whereas before

I'd dipped into the data to find examples to illustrate my hunches, over the last two years I've tried to account for one child's growth in writing. Instead of skimming rocks over the surface of the data, I've had to plunge into it. Instead of revelling in which Susie could do, I've tried to understand her growth in writing.

It has been along and rigorous process. I've studied the data hierarchically, in terms of categories. I've traced Susie's development along certain key variables. And I've studied the data chronologically, bringing together all the information from disparate sources which could help me understand any one point in time...and then trying to see how one point connects with the next.

After eight months of working with the data on Susie, I began to write again. The first 100 pages of Lessons from a Child were redrafted at least 20 times--an agonizing process; slow torture I called it then, slow growth I call it now. Looking back, I can see the struggle was for distance. The early drafts, like my early articles, suffered what Lofland (1971) calls "descriptive excess."

> Descriptive excess is the practice of becoming so engrossed in the rendering of concrete details of a setting that one loses connection with any analytic categories and concepts that help to order, explain or summarize the concrete details. Reports tending to descriptive excess resemble simple histories or

novelistic descriptions. (p. 129)

But draft by draft, I did gain some distance on Susie's changes and in time it became easier to select the one particular which would convey insights. The final half of the book was written more quickly, and the revisions have been smaller ones.

Lessons from a Child is written as a story; it's a true tale of what I have learned from watching one child's growth in writing. Neither its language nor its organization resembles a research report. This is in part because of the nature of my subject. Because Susie's growth in writing was an interactive process, I've tried to show the youngster as she works alongside her friends, her teachers, and her researcher. Because her growth in writing took place within her classroom, I've tried to show the crowded, old-fashioned room, and the white clapboard schoolhouse. Because Susie learned through help from her teachers as well as through her own explorations, I have tried to convey a sense for both.

But Lessons from a Child is written as a story for another reason. Because I believe we learn through involvement and interaction, I have tried to write this dissertation in such a way that my readers can participate in the drama of the research project and of Susie's growth in writing.

Section 8

# RESUME

Lucy McCormick Calkins
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## EDUCATION

Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Mass.
Transferred to Williams College after completing sophomore year, 1971.

Williams College, Williamstown, Mass.
Majored in religion, minored in history.
B.A. cum laude, 1973

University of Hartford, Hartford, Conn.
Teacher Corps
M.A. in Reading Instruction, 1974
Certified Reading Specialist

University of Connecticut, Storrs, Conn.
Courses toward 6th year degree and elementary school teaching certification, 1977.

University of New Hampshire
Advanced Journalism Seminar, 1978

Harvard University
Human Development Seminar, 1979

New York University
English Education
Ph.D. (to be received in June, 1982)
Dissertation on the teaching and learning of writing.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Assistant Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University. Specialization in the teaching and learning of reading and writing, K-12. (position begins 9/82).

Research Associate for National Institute of Education study, "How Children Change as Writers." Full-time, two year position, University of New Hampshire, 1978-80.

Consultant for universities, writing institutes and school districts. Topics include writing development K-12, ethnographic research methodology, writing for publication, supervision in the classroom, children's literature, teachers as researchers.

Speaker and/or consultant at the following universities:
Wesleyan, 1977
University of Connecticut, 1978, 1981
University of New Hampshire, often in 1978-1980
SUNY at Albany, 1979
Harvard University, 1980

Georgia State, 1980
University of Denver, 1980
Hofstra University, 1980
New York University, 1981, 1982
University of Virginia, 1981
Penn State University, 1981
SUNY at Fredonia, 1981
University of Wisconsin, 1981, 1982
Oakland University, 1981, 1982
George Mason University, 1981
Arizona State University, 1982

Faculty member of the University of New Hampshire summer writing program, 1981 and 1982.

Faculty member of Northeastern University's summer writing institute on Martha's Vineyard, summer 1982.

Frequent in-service work in the following school districts:
Wellesley, Massachusetts, 1/79-2/80 (weekly)
Brookline, Massachusetts, 1/80-4/80 (weekly)
Weyland, Massachusetts, 2/80-12/80
Scarsdale, New York, 1/80-12/81 (weekly)
Brooklyn, District 15, 1/81-present
Stamford, Connecticut, 5/81-8/81
Oxford, Connecticut, 2/81-present
"City as Curriculum" Project, New York City, 9/81-present
Guilderland, New York, 1981-82

Speaker and/or consultant in the following school districts: (1-5 days)
New Haven Language Arts Planning Committee, 3/78
Pine Point School, Connecticut, 5/78
Lenox, Massachusetts, 4 sessions, Spring 1978.
Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 9/78
Meridith, New Hampshire, 1/79
Pittsford, New Hampshire, 2/79
Keene, New Hampshire, 2/79
Manchester, New Hampshire, 4/79
Concord, New Hampshire, 3 sessions, Winter, 1980
Fairfax, Virginia, 1/80
Hamburg, New York, 3/80
Rochester, New York, 4/80
Atlanta, Georgia, 3/80
Nassua, New Hampshire, 4/80
Hillsborough, New Hampshire, 4/80
Atkinson, New Hampshire, 5/80
Hartsdale, New York, 5/80, 9/80, 10/80/ 11/80
Little Neck, Long Island, 7/80
Lincoln, Massachusetts, 10/80
Monsey, New York, 11/80
Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1/81, 10/81
Scotia, Glenville, New York, 1/81
Project CARES, Exton, Pennsylvania, 2/81, 10/81
Pennsylvania Writing Project, Chester County, Pa., 2/81
Bronx, New York, 2/81
Bridgeport, Connecticut, 10/81
IMPCA project, Brooklyn, New York, 10/81
Wilton, Connecticut, 2/82

Phoenix, Arizona, 3/82
Bedford, New York, 4/82
Weston, Connecticut, 5/82

Speaker at the following conferences:

- "Reading Writing," regional conference, National Council of Teachers of English, Hartford, Connecticut, 2/78
- "Put Punctuation in Its Place," National conference, National Council of Teachers of English, Hartford, Connecticut, 3/79
- "Writing's Place in the Elementary School," New York State's annual convention for teachers of English, SUNY, Albany, 5/80
- "Recent Research in Writing," Preconvention institute of International Reading Association, St. Louis/Lake of the Ozarks, 5/80
- "A Writing Approach to Reading," preconvention meeting, International Reading Association, St. Louis, 5/80
- "Writing's Place in Our Inflated Curriculum," Writing Conference at Hofstra University, 10/80
- "The Energy of Revision," national conference, National Council of Teachers of English, Cincinatti, 11/80
- Discussion Leader, Elementary Section Meeting, National Council of Teachers of English, Cincinatti, 11/80
- "Writing Reading," N.Y. State Education Department, Conference at World Trade Center, N.Y.C., 1/81
- "The Eye of the Hurricane, Conferencing in the Writing Workshop," Project CARES, Chester County, Pennsylvania, 2/81
- "The Writing Connection," regional conference, University of Virginia, 4/81
- "Composition and the Classroom," Southeast Iowa Writing Conference, 10/81
- "Child as Informant," Discussion Leader, Elementary Section Meeting, National Council of Teachers of English, 1981
- "Co-Chair, two day workshops, "Let Children Show Us How to Help Them Write," National Council of Teachers of English, Boston, 1981.
- "Writing and the Middle-school Child," National Council of Teachers of English, Boston, 1981.
- Writing in our City Schools, World Trade Center, 1982.

Other

- CBS Television Guest Speaker, Sunrise Semester, half-hour interview. "Writing to Learn and Learning to Write," 2/19/80
- Research Grant Award Winner, Research Foundation, National Council of Teachers of English, 1980.
- Participant in two year N.I.E. funded study on teachers as researchers, Columbia University, 1980.
- Consulting Editor, Learning Magazine.
- Reviewed Writing and the Writer, Frank Smith. (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980)
- Participant, National Institute of Education, working conference on Effective Communication of Writing Research, Los Angeles, Calif. 10/81

Teacher and one of the founders of a public alternative elementary school in Middlefield, Connecticut, 6/76-6/78.

Teacher and program leader in alternative program in a public junior high school in the same district as above, Durham/Middlefield, Connecticut, 6/75-6/76.

Teacher in British Primary School, Oxfordshire, England, 6/74-6/75.

Remedial Reading Teacher in inner city high school in Hartford, Connecticut (also full time MA student), 6/73-6/74.

## PUBLICATIONS

"Writing Taps a New Energy Source," "Children Learn the Writers Craft," and "When Children Want to Punctuate," In *Donald Graves in Australia*, ed. by R.D. Walshe, Primary English Teaching Association, Rozelle, Australia, 1981.

"Children's Rewriting Strategies," In *Research in the Teaching of English*, January 1981. Also to be published in *New Directions in Composition Research*, ed. by Richard Beach and Lillian Bridwell.

"The Craft of Writing," *Teacher Magazine*, October 1980.

"One School's Writing Program," *National Elementary School's Principal Magazine*, June 1980.

"Helping Children Grow into Poetry," *Learning Magazine*, May/June 1980.

"Writers Put Punctuation in Its Place," RESEARCH UPDATE, *Language Arts*, May 1980.

"Children Learn the Writer's Craft," RESEARCH UPDATE, *Language Arts*, February 1980.

"A Writer's Approach to Reading," *Classroom Practices in Teaching English*, National Council of Teachers of English, Evanston, Ill., 1980.

"Punctuate? Punctuate. Punctuate!" *Learning Magazine*, February 1980.

"Andrea Learns to Make Writing Hard," RESEARCH UPDATE, *Language Arts*, January 1980.

"Children's Research: It Begins with a Wrong Answer," *Learning Magazine*, October 1979.

"Learning to Throw Away," *Language Arts*, October 1979.

"Children Write, and Their Writing Becomes Their Textbook," *Language Arts*, May 1979.

"Writers Need Readers, Not Robins," *Language Arts*, September 1978.

"Children Discover What Writers Know," *Learning Magazine*, April 1978.

"Look Up, Write What You see," *Language Arts*, April 1978.

In draft form:

"Learning to Write and Writing to Learn," To be published in *Child-Watching: Observing the Language Learner*, edited by Angela Jaggar and Trika Smith-Burke.

"*Lessons from a Child: On the Teaching and Learning of Writing*, presently negotiating with a publisher.

## Section 9

## Book Proposal

Title: Lessons from a Child:
On the Teaching and Learning of Writing

Purpose: To tell the story of one child's growth in writing

To show the teaching and learning of writing as they occurred within two classrooms

To instruct readers in the components and sequences of writing development

Format: 275 page book
20 chapters

Audiences: Teachers
University students
Parents
Researchers

Author: Lucy McCormick Calkins
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1-203-888-1426

# Book Proposal

## Lessons from a Child: On the Teaching and Learning of Writing

by

Lucy McCormick Calkins

Through a grant from the National Institute of Education, I was a live-in researcher in Susie's third and fourth grade classrooms. On a day-to-day basis for two years, I pulled my chair alongside Susie's and recorded what she did when she wrote. Lessons from a Child is the story of her growth in writing.

In times of declining writing test scores and of articles on "Johnny Can't Write," this book is a success story. Susie portrays what children *can* do as writers, and she shows the sequence of changes through which one child learned the craft of writing. No claims are made that Susie is representative of all children, but when the curtain opens on our story, she appears as quite an ordinary youngster in an ordinary public school classroom. As the drama unfolds, the problems with which Susie wrestles and the solutions she invents are characteristically child-like.

In the day-to-day particulars of this one child, teachers, parents and graduate students will see the uniqueness of their own children. Ironically, by highlighting the particulars of one youngster, I create a character who is more representative of all children than a composite child could be. For although we talk about writing development "in general," it always happens "in particular."

Because Susie's changes as a writer are shown within the drama of classroom life, Lessons from a Child illustrates both the teaching and the learning of writing. When Susie and Diane squeeze onto the same chair to read, question and extend each other's stories, readers learn about peer conferences. When Susie thumbtacks her rough draft onto a bulletin board called "Make It Messy to Make It Clear," readers learn a method of honoring children's revisions. Embedded in the story of Susie's development as a writer is the story of two teachers' development as teachers of writing. When the book begins, both classrooms are traditional, teacher-directed rooms. The teachers dole out assignments, tell children when to begin and finish their writing, and then correct the papers. Like so many teachers, Mrs. Howard and Mrs. Currier initially paid attention only to the two ends of composing: topic choice and evaluation.

During the two year research project, these classrooms evolved into model writing process classrooms. In both rooms, teachers soon put writing at the center of their curriculum. "In giving priority to writing," the principal of the school explained, "we tell children, 'I know you have something worth saying and that what you are saying can be the basis for your learning.'"

## The Audience

Until recently, there wasn't a great demand for textbooks and professional literature on children's writing development, for a far greater premium was put on the receiving act of reading than on the sending act of writing. But over the past few years, there is a growing interest in composition, and this interest is shared by people from schools, universities and from the general public. Bay Area writing projects have sprung up everywhere; states have sponsored in-service programs in writing; universities have added writing courses to their roster of elementary education courses.

In response to this burgeoning interest in composition, there has been a flurry of new publications on writing. The new literature seems to fall into three categories, and each category has limitations.

1. Writers and university professors such as Donald Murray and William Zinsser have written books about the writing process. These have limited applicability to elementary schools for they are not about children.
2. Books by writers such as Koch, Elbow and Lopate are filled with specific ideas for teaching children to write, but these books have neither the credibility of being grounded in research, nor do they address developmental issues involved in children's writing.
3. Researchers have written about children's writing development (Bissex, Bereiter, Kroll, Nathan) but they write for other researchers more than for parents and teachers. Also, none of these researchers have done longitudinal studies of writing development as it occurs within classrooms.

There are books on writing development and there are books on writing instruction. The uniqueness of Lessons from a Child is that the teaching and learning of writing are shown as they occur in response to each other. Lessons from a Child presents, in the truest sense of the word, a child-centered approach to teaching writing.